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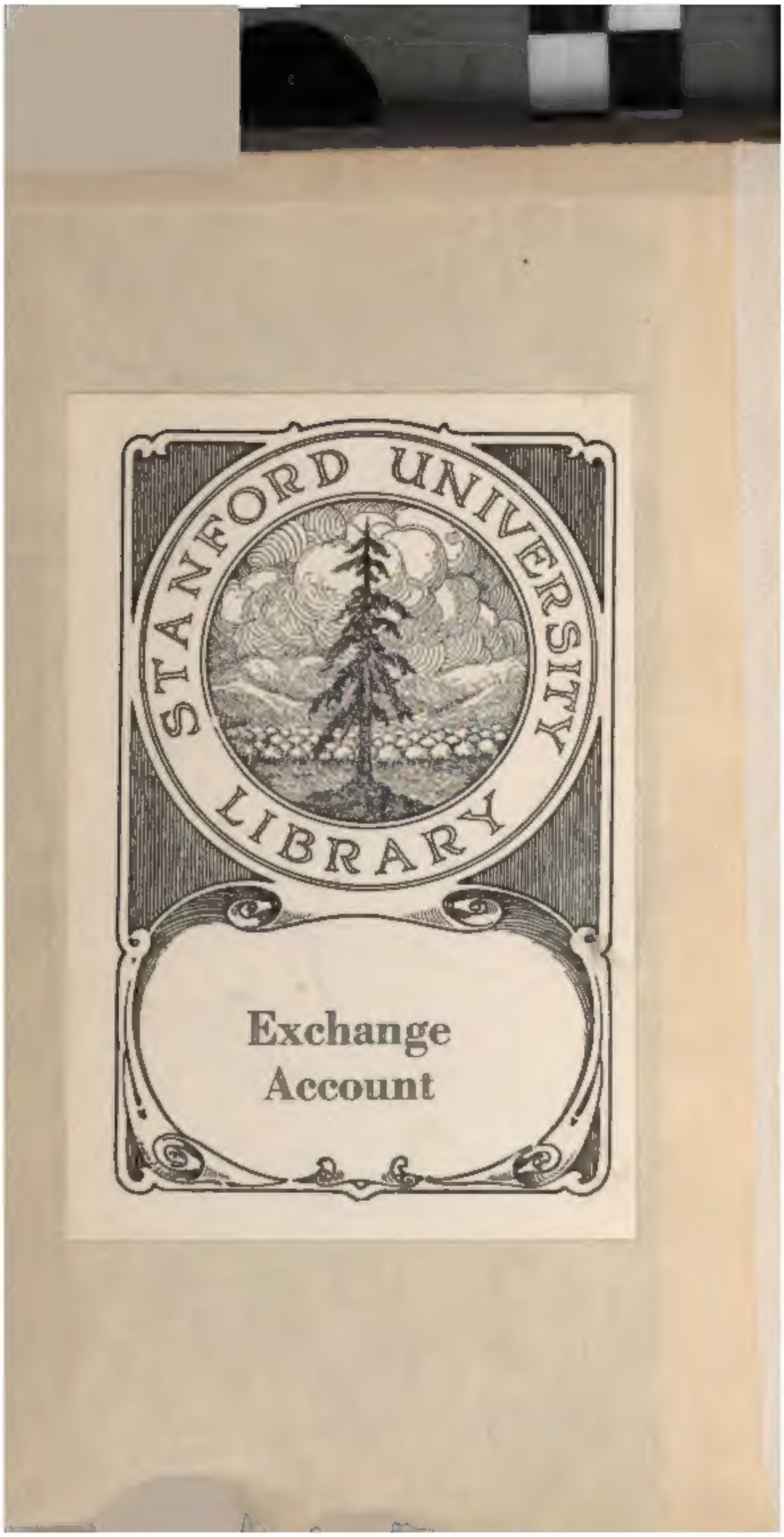

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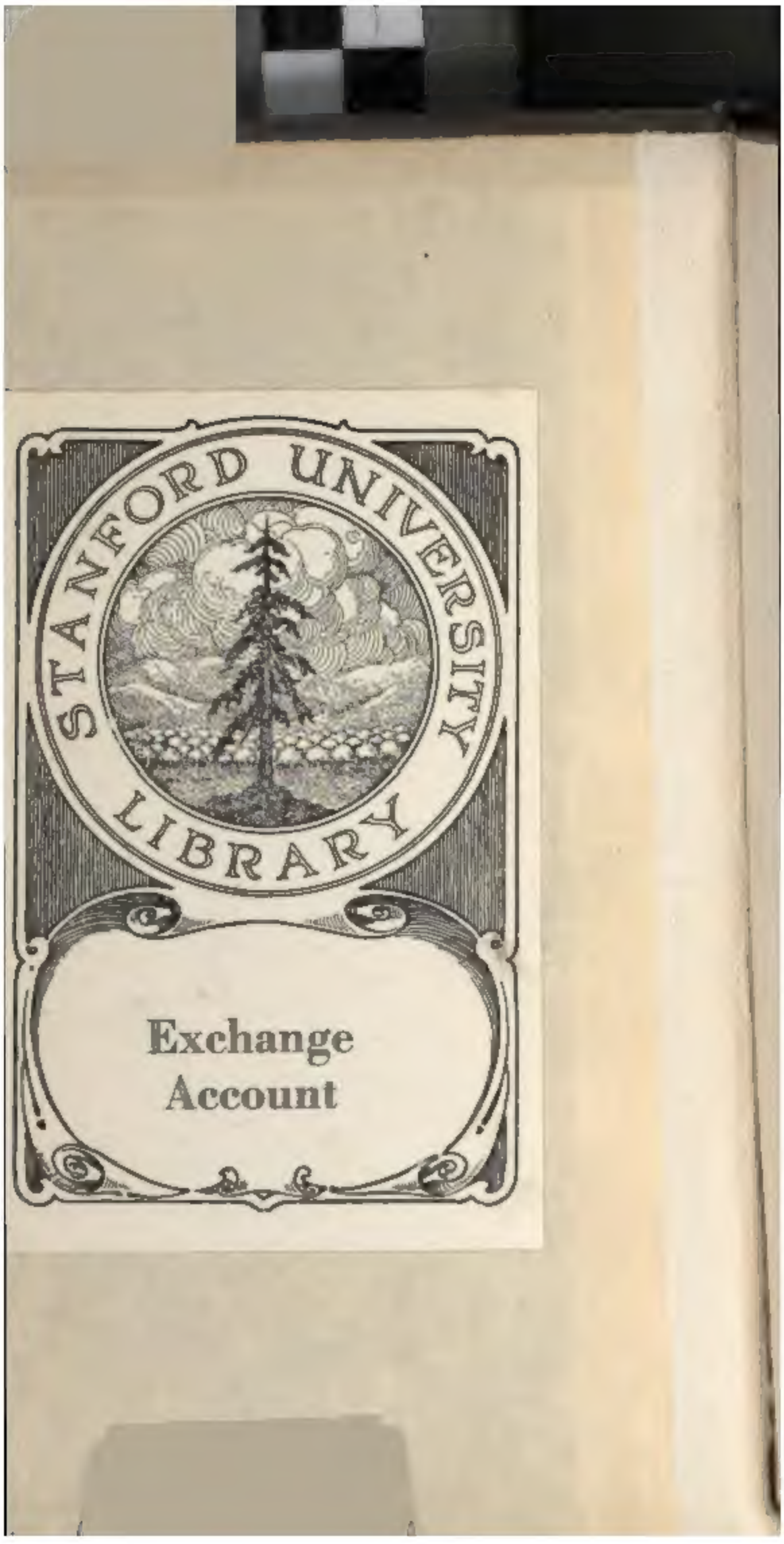
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EVERY-DAY ENGLISH.

A SEQUEL TO

"WORDS AND THEIR USES."

BY

RICHARD GRANT WHITE.

Latio imperatrix supra grammaticam

BOSTON:
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To

FRANCIS JAMES CHILD, M.A., PH.D.,

BOYLSTON PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND ORATORY,
HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

MY DEAR CHILD: —

Some parts of this book I hope and believe you will approve; some others I fear you will disapprove. It is not for the former reason, however, that I give my desultory work the honor of having the name of a scholar of your grade upon this page, but that I may have the pleasure of thus bearing publicly my testimony to the value of your linguistic labors, and the yet greater pleasure of offering you this token of the friendship of

Yours always,

R. G. W

[redacted]

ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME of the following chapters appeared serially in the New York "Times" in the years 1877–78, under the title of this book. Others were published from time to time in the "Galaxy" magazine in the years 1873–76. Little change has been made in them except by omission and condensation. Of the author's more recent writing upon the same subject only a small part has been embodied in this volume.

PREFACE.

Nine years have passed since the publication of the book to which this is a sequel. Were I much concerned about the fate of that book, or about the linguistic reputation of its writer, I should not be without occasion of self-congratulation in respect to either. The views of the English language which were set forth in "Words and their Uses" need now no defense; nor shall they now have any defense at the hands of its author, except that which they may incidentally, almost inevitably, receive in the course of an examination in this book of subjects kindred to those of its predecessor. That usage, even the usage of the best writers, is not the final law of language; that in the scientific sense of the word it is not a law at all; and that English is, to all intents and purposes, without formal grammar, are truths now perceived by so many intelligent, well-informed, and thinking men, that he who proclaimed them may safely leave them to work out their proper ends without the aid of further advocacy. The views taken in the book in question of the use of particular words, and of their perversion from their proper sense, even by writers of repute, seem also to need no apology or modification; at least I have none to offer. They may remain as they were written.

Controversy is so extremely disagreeable to me that I have always avoided it, if I could do so without seeming to admit that I had committed the offense — it might be said the literary crime — of having undertaken to teach that which I myself had not studied; of having pretended to knowledge that I had not acquired. On a very few occa-

sions — three only, I believe — I have been led to enter upon my own defense; but in each of these I was personally assailed; my assailant not having been content to attack my doctrine and to refute my argument to the best of his ability, but having sought to gibbet me as a pretender, and to establish his claims to the hangman's office by an imposing exhibition of his own enormous "scholarship." Such assaults as these only I have repelled. Otherwise I am content to leave what I write to stand or fall by its own strength. Moreover, I have little respect for controversy, or even for discussion, in the establishment of truth or the extinction of error. The disputants, after a fencing match in which the buttons are apt to come off their foils, even if rankling poison does not infect their blades, remain each of them "of his own opinion still," having merely fought for the amusement of the lookers-on. Men in general are not convinced by arguments, *pro* and *con*, by retorts, by pleas and replications, rejoinders, rebutters, and surrebutters. The world at large learns through direct dogmatic teaching by those who have strong convictions. The doctrines of such men, suiting more or less the temper of their times, are tested by the general sense, and are gradually absorbed or rejected in the progress of years. New doctrine must always be bread cast upon the waters.[1]

And there is yet another reason not without weight for the discontinuance, if not for the avoiding, of controversy. When a man or an army is beaten there is an end of that man or that army, at least for the time being; but in argument, in discussion, there has yet been discovered no way of preventing the renewed defense of demonstrated error or the reassertion of exploded fallacy.

It was not at all surprising to me that my declaration of the very unimportant nature of the remains of formal gram-

[1] This paragraph is from an article in the New York *Times* which was published some months before the appearance of Professor Max Müller's article on Spelling in the *Fortnightly Review*.

mar in the English language, and of the utter futility of grammar study as a means of learning to speak English well, was received with surprise and provoked opposition. When, some ten years ago, I declared English to be, to all intents and purposes, a grammarless tongue, on the one hand were some who hailed the doctrine as true and accepted it; but on the other there were heard the cries of defiance and the sneers of derision. The result thus far is that the more the question has been discussed, the wider has been the spread of the belief among thinking men that English has (with some trifling exceptions) no grammatical construction, — that is, construction according to syntactical laws, — and that since then English grammars, so called, have been written and published in which an attempt has been made to sweep out a great deal of the old scholastic rubbish with which children were crammed and choked in the mistaken effort to teach them how to speak their mother tongue. Grammars have been diminishing in volume, the diminution being due to the reduction in quantity of dusty nonsense, — of rules which were shackles instead of guides, and of examples which burdened the memory, but which did not teach the use of words. But much remains to be done. People have yet fully to grasp the fact that there really is no such thing as grammar in the English language; that all systems of teaching English-speaking children their mother tongue by rules and exceptions, and notes and observations, and cautions and corollaries, are useless, and not only so, but worse, because such a system naturally leads to the injurious misapprehension that writing or speaking grammatically is something else than writing or speaking naturally, — something else than saying in plain language just what you mean. The new modified and curtailed grammars are the fruits of an absurd notion that to learn to speak and write his own language a man must be taught *some* "grammar" in one shape or another. This is but a natural attempt to break a fall. The struggle will

go on until at last the grammarians and the grammar-loving pedagogues, utterly overthrown, will pass peaceably away, and be carried out to sepulture with a funeral service from Lindley Murray read over their venerable remains.

English grammar is to all intents and purposes dead. The little life it had was so purely fictitious that one smart assault extinguished it forever. The time is coming, and it will be here erelong, when there will be no more thought of teaching an English-speaking boy to use his mother tongue by grammar rules than of teaching him astrology. I am often asked why I do not write an English grammar as a text-book according to my own principles. How can I do so, when the very first of my principles, if I have any, in regard to English, is that it has no appreciable grammar; that all English grammar books, even the best of them, should be burned; and that the study of language, as one that requires trained faculties, a cultivated judgment, and no little knowledge of literature, should be postponed until a late period of the time passed by young people in study, — a notion horrible to many teachers of schools, and utterly abominable to all publishers of school-books.

The high priests, and the low priests, of the mysteries of English grammar have not ceased to deal with me acrimoniously. Let their railing pass by me as the idle wind: irritating as it is, I would much rather face it than a sharp northwester. I wish, however, to put one of their misrepresentations in its proper light. They try to bring upon me the odium that pertains to arrogance. In the words of one of them, I "assume to be a critical authority upon the English language," and also "an adept in the use" of it. These assertions are absolutely untrue in letter and in spirit. I assume no such authority, nor have I ever assumed it, directly or indirectly. I profess no such skill; nor have I ever written or said a word implying such profession. I do not profess — I may say that I hardly try — to write good English; I only profess to know, what hun-

ireds of my readers know as well as I do, when good English is written. Did I not believe that I know this, it would indeed have been presuming in me to write what I have written upon this subject. Yet so absolutely untrue is this accusation, that I am not in the position even of having put myself forward as a critical writer upon language, or upon art, or any other subject except Shakespeare. "Words and their Uses" is not a gathering of volunteer essays. The papers of which it is made up are chiefly the fruit of inquiries addressed to me by strangers; and they were published, as is the case with all else that I have written, because people paid me for the right to publish them. I would much rather have spent my time and such strength as I have upon some other subject.

Yet I have one other motive than that which I have mentioned; for I do verily believe that whoever writes as these grammarians teach men to write will be sure never to produce a sentence worth reading. A man who takes thought about his "grammar," and is in an anxious frame of mind as to whether his sentences will parse, may as well lay down his pen if he writes for other readers than himself. A man whose writing, even for its style, to say nothing of its matter, is worth the paper on which it is printed, has other things upon his mind than the construction of his sentences according to the "rules of grammar;" and to show this to my readers is one of the objects of this book and of its predecessor. He who can write what is worth the reading may make his own grammar; and he surely will do so, as all such men, great writers or small, have done before him. Many of them, indeed all of them, have fallen into formal errors, — errors which offer very pretty occasions for the gratification of the critical malice of such censors as those that I am noticing. Addison, who criticised others, and whose own style has long been regarded as a model, erred often thus; and even Goldsmith, whose style is more correct, and, in my judgment, more pleasing

committed sins against "grammar" of which I am sure that this sort of critics could not be guilty; as sure as I am that their writing would be quite free from some other peculiarities which have been remarked in those authors. I commend them to their attention; they may parse them and criticise them to their hearts' content, and find congenial occupation in so doing.[1]

It is a reproach upon grammatical studies that they tend to produce a swarm of semi-literary censors who dart singly or in flocks upon those who enter their field, singing and stinging with a delight and a venom at least as great as that of their insect prototypes. Like them, they are really of almost inexpressible insignificance; but like them they manage to make themselves heard, and felt, and hated. Those, indeed, we can keep off by bars and nets, or drive away by odors which are only less noisome than their buzz and their bite; but against these there is no bar. Their impudence surmounts and their impertinence penetrates all defenses. Their glee over the annoyance which they hope to inflict is, like that of their model, more irritating than their little sting; although against that there is no protection but a moral indifference which is as rare as a skin thick as the hide of a rhinoceros.

These carpers, even in their best moods, think, and feel, and write with the motive embodied in the saying, "Physician, heal thyself," than which a more foolish requisition

[1] Picking flaws is poor business, but Addison, for example, could write, and not only write but leave uncorrected, such sentences as this in his *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* —

"The marble of the arch looks very white and fresh, as being exposed to the winds and salt-sea-vapors, that by continually fretting it preserves itself from that mouldy color, which others of the same materials have contracted." (Fifth edition, 1736.)

This might have been written by Mrs Gamp. Such confusion mars the charm of Addison's writings not so rarely as some of those who would have us believe that they give their days and nights to the study of them would seem to think.

was never uttered. That a physician cannot heal himself is no ground for belief that his advice may not profit others; nor is even the fact that he is ailing evidence that he is ignorant of his condition or unable to better it. He may be, of choice or necessity, too much occupied with others' troubles to look after his own. The occasion when this saying was first uttered is an exponent of its spirit, which was more fully expressed when the Person to whom it was addressed was told by those who passed Him "wagging their heads," as these others wag theirs, that if He was what He was accused of professing to be, He might save Himself. I do not set myself up as an example to be followed; and any endeavor to discredit what I teach by criticism of my own writing is entirely from the purpose. Consequently, writers of the class to which I have referred will not find it profitable to waste time, pens, ink, and paper upon me. I have noticed them vicariously now once for all, and have paid in advance all their claims upon me, saying grace, Franklin-wise, "over the whole pork-barrel." I do not expect to be free of them because I have not in these pages or elsewhere made any personal remarks in regard to any one of them. As well might a man walk through Donnybrook Fair with a shillelagh in his hand and expect not to be assaulted because he attacked no one, as to write on the language of his day and escape personal attack from these pene-literators. There is but one way of placating them in my case, and that is that publishers should engage them instead of me to write upon this subject. And on a certain trifling condition I am more than willing that they, or any one of them, should take my place. Like the boy on the edge of the battle in "Henry V.," "I would give all my fame for a pot of ale and safety." Let the publishers pay me the money, and let them write the books, and I will gladly resign my office for some other more to my liking.

For the method of writing which most of this class of

critics commend I have no respect. They may choose to write by rule, and it may answer their purpose to do so; but I do not so choose, nor would it answer my purpose. My mother tongue is mine by inheritance and by occupation, as it is also that of most of my readers, and I use it, have used it, and shall use it as if it belonged to me, and not as if I belonged to it, caring only to say what I mean in such a way as to impress it upon my readers, and with utter indifference to the rules of any grammarian or the dictums of any lexicographer. I am not like Sir Thomas Overbury's pedant, "who dares not thinke a thought that the nominative case governs not the verbe." To such a position of independence I hope to bring others.

So much in reference to what has been said about "Words and their Uses" and its author by those who have put themselves forward as representatives of the grammarians and the precedent-hunters. Of late some of them, possibly in ignorance of what was written on both sides of this question years ago, have sounded the trumpet-call to controversy. But to what good this fighting over of old battles? What they talk about happened *consule Planco*.

The republication in England — I do not know in what quarter — of some of these chapters in their original form brought me letters from unknown correspondents there, one of whom says something (which he had before said publicly in England), the truth, and indeed the importance, of which I would be the last person to undervalue. This is, that my view of English grammar had occurred to him and to others. Indeed, I believe it to be true, and I own with pleasure, that no small part of any worth or importance which the theory of English speech set forth by me in the following pages, and in "Words and their Uses" some years ago, may have, is largely due to the fact that it gives form and utterance to doubts and queries which have of late years sprung up in the minds of many intelligent and thoughtful persons, for whom I have only had the good fortune to speak, going

before them, protesting and prophesying in the name of common-sense.

The title of this book, like that of its predecessor, tells plainly enough the purpose with which the articles of which it is composed were written. That purpose was to help intelligent and fairly well educated persons, who had made no special study of language, and who were perhaps acquainted with no language but their own, to a knowledge of good English, to help them to protect themselves against the contamination of debasing influences in speech, to show them, so far as I am able to do so, the virtue and the beauty of a plain, simple, direct, and exact use of their mother tongue, that tongue which has been for three hundred years the noblest, strongest, richest, most largely capable language ever uttered by man. The liberation of English from the restraints of formal grammar, the wide diffusion among those who are born to speak it of such a degree of education as makes them all, or nearly all, readers, and the freedom of English literature from that authoritative academic influence which is almost paramount in the literature of other civilized peoples, combine to endow it on the one hand with a union of strength, flexibility, and inartificiality, in which it is peculiar, and to expose it on the other to perversion and defilement. To the latter liability, the multiplicity of newspapers, and the fact that English newspapers, and even English books, are largely written by persons who are altogether without literary training, greatly contribute. If Horace could justly say, "We all, educated and uneducated, write poetry," what might be said now of English-speaking men, and of English-speaking women! And what is true of all the peoples to whom English is their mother tongue is peculiarly and dangerously true of the people of the United States at the present day. Here the English language is in the hands, is almost at the mercy, of a public which unites, in a degree unprecedented, intellectual activity and independence of thought with infe-

sive education, and, what is almost worse in regard to language than no education, that half-education which is got from text-books and text-book teachers in public schools. There is no worse English, in some respects, than that which is spoken and written by those who learn their language in "American" public schools. Better speak the dialect of a peasant in the remotest rural shire in England, than such a prim, pretentious language, begotten by grammar upon dictionary. That at least would be genuine and natural; this is fictitious and artificial. The tendency of our public-school teaching in language is toward a combination of vulgarity and pomposity. And this tendency is greatly aggravated by the addiction of our public to the reading of newspapers. Whatever advantages this habit may have in other respects, it would be well, so far as our language is concerned, if nine hundred and ninety-nine in every thousand of our newspapers could be suppressed to-morrow.

Errors, harmful errors, in the use of language, however, are not confined to the uneducated and the half-educated writers who address and mislead the public in such quarters. Perversions of words from their proper uses occur even in the writings of those who have, and who deserve, an honored place in literature. Upon the latter, as well as upon the former, I have ventured to comment, although I am conscious that I myself am not unlikely to be among the sinners in this respect. But what of that? Do two wrongs ever make one right? I stand as ready to condemn myself as to censure any other. It may be said that no small proportion of the changes which are constantly taking place in living languages are due to these unconscious perversions. None the less, however, is perversion to be deplored. If perversion could be lessened, change would be lessened, and language would continue the longer a medium of expression comprehensible and unmistakable by all those by whom it is spoken. What a bless

ing would it have been to mankind if an unchanged continuity of English speech had made the greater part of the labor of some of Shakespeare's commentators superfluous, and the rest of it impossible! Such a continuity has begun to prevail. The writers of the Elizabethan period needed commentators in the days of Queen Anne, a hundred years later; but the Queen Anne writers need no comment to make their language comprehensible to us, who come nearly two centuries after them. It was in the hope of effecting something toward this desirable end that I began the writings which have resulted in "Words and their Uses," and in its present sequel. I have been led by the suggestions of others and by the tendencies of the times into the discussion of other topics, connected with the main purpose which I had in view, particularly the proposed change in English spelling; but this I hope will be not unacceptable to my readers.

To those who have followed me thus far I need hardly say that I have not written what, by any stretch of the term, may rightly be called a grammar, or even a grammatical dissertation. Nor have I sought or desired to present my readers with anything like a text-book, or with a "scientific" and "exhaustive" treatment of my subject. And my discursive discussions are absolutely without any grammatical tendency. They will not help any one to parse; and those, therefore, who pine to parse elegantly, and to take prizes in the parsing matches that will naturally follow the spelling matches that have fired so many ardent minds with emulation during the last two or three years, need not look for help in this book.

Nor will the book teach any one to spell. In the first place, I have not the highest respect for spelling: I don't take it to heart. Uniformity of practice in this respect is, indeed, desirable; but a lack of strict conformity to the received orthography of the time is not a matter of such grave importance that an occasional lapse from it should fill any

one with shame, or be made the occasion of ridicule. Many persons are born with the capacity to be good spellers, and they become so early in life by a kind of intuition. Others are made so, but more rarely, by study and practice. Some persons never learn to spell with unerring correctness; and these are far from being the dullest or the least instructed of mankind. I have known so many persons, feeble-minded and ignorant, who were irreproachable in this respect, that, having met with others who were able to utter the thoughts of strong and richly-stored minds with clearness and force, but who were hardly able to write one page of a letter without some failure to conform to the standard of that Juggernaut of the timid in language, "the dictionary," I have sometimes thought that perfection in orthography naturally belonged rather to the former class than to the latter, and that they who took to spelling were they whose words were likely to be of small importance, whether they spelled well or ill. Of course, this is not really so. There are fools and ignoramuses who spell badly, and wise and learned men who never go astray in this respect; it only remains that deviation from the received orthography of the day, if not frequent or gross, is not to be regarded as evidence of incapacity or ignorance.

And English orthography, so called, is so unsystematic that it cannot be justly regarded as an ultimate end of the highest importance, or even, either as process or as result, of very great intellectual value. Its only real standard is usage, its only safe guide is etymology; and the latter, often disregarded, it is now sought by many learned philologists, and particularly by many phonologists, to set aside in favor of the phonetic method.

The proposed change seems to me to be needless and full of peril, for reasons which are given somewhat fully in the course of the second division of this book, in which the various arguments in its favor which have been presented within the last few years by distinguished philologists are

examined freely and without timidity, but I hope not without due deference. It seems to me that there is altogether too much ado made about this question of spelling, which, as signs cannot represent sounds but can only suggest them, must after all be a mere matter of convenience and of fashion, in which changes are likely to take place for the mere sake of convenience and of fashion. For example, the Turveydrops of orthography, even in the last generation, insisted upon *musick* as the spelling of the word which all sane people now write *music;* and our children may yet horrify some of us by writing *bric* or *brik*, instead of *brick*, in conformity to a new fashion of their time. Whoever, therefore, in that case should now write *musick* or *bric* would be merely behind or before the fashion of the day.

The committee of eminent scholars appointed by the American Philological Society to consider (and to advocate) the scheme of phonetic spelling presented as the result of their labors a temperate and cautious report, the point of which was that it would be well to drop gradually some of our superfluous terminal and double letters. Well enough: such changes are sure to come gradually in the course of time hereafter as they have come in the course of time heretofore. But it surely was not necessary that Whitney, and March, and Haldeman, and Trumbull, and Child should bow the heavens on high and come flying all abroad to tell us that. The point to be decided is whether, for example, we shall spell *fizik* in the singular, *fizix* in the plural, and *fizishun* and *fizikl* and *fizisist* in the derivatives. Against that which is the entering wedge of a scheme that will rive our written language into such splinters I have protested and endeavored to reason.

In the first division of this book an examination of a thorough and systematic discussion of the so-called sounds of letters, by one of our most eminent philologists, from whom I venture to differ on some points, is made the occasion of remarks upon the pronunciation of English, which I

hope will not be found without interest and value. But I do not undertake to teach pronunciation. For, in the first place, I am not sure that I pronounce correctly myself; whether I did so or not never having been a matter of any thought or care to me at any time of my life, that I can remember; any more than whether I spelled correctly, as to which I have never within my memory given myself the least trouble. Next, I doubt very much the ability of any one to teach pronunciation by the use of letters, or of any printed signs whatever, however ingeniously contrived. For, whether a sound is indicated by a combination of letters or by a special sign, the question at once arises, must arise, What is the sound thus indicated? To which there is no answer, can be no answer, except by the voice uttering the sound; and having that, the sign is a superfluity at best, at worst a stumbling-block. Pronunciation cannot be taught otherwise than by speech; and thus it is always learned. And this brings me to the third reason why I do not propose to teach pronunciation; which is that it is not to be learned by study and from teachers, even from those who teach orally. Pronunciation is acquired slowly, during youth; it comes insensibly; it strikes root deeply; it is almost ineradicable. After maturity it is positively so in most cases. Those in which it is not are so few that they may be left out of consideration. Gross faults in this respect may be corrected by observation, by practice, and by careful watching; but let excitement once relax the consciousness and the vigilance of the speaker, and early habit, which in language seems not second nature but first nature, instantly resumes its sway, and the precise speaker by rule of a minute before lapses into provincialism or vulgarity. There is no guide to good pronunciation but daily association with the best speakers; and that, to be effective, should begin early in life.

And when I am asked, as I am sorry to say I often am asked, what dictionary is the best authority, I am obliged to say, as I am when people ask me how to spell *parallel*

that I don't know. There are dictionaries which are useful and full of information, but in living language there is no authority, and can be none. Usage — the usage of the most cultivated society — is the only guide; and this should be, and to a certain extent is, moulded by reason and analogy. But if usage chooses to set reason and analogy aside it will do so. Dictionaries are but records of usage, as it has been observed by the dictionary makers; and the changes of language — that is, of speech — are so constant and so subtle that a dictionary can hardly be well launched upon the public before it begins to be historical, a record of obsolescent sounds and meanings.

The most important part of our every-day English has not to do with grammar, or with spelling, or with pronunciation. It has to do with the right use of words as to their meaning and their logical connection; and this *may* be learned by study and by care at almost any time of life. In illustration of the need of such study and care, here is the close of a sentence which I found in an official letter written by a man who I know was very sensitive about his "grammar," and who never by any chance misspelled a word: —

". . . . that this is paid by the Chief Clerk of the —— Revenue from funds temporally advanced from small seizures, and that the sum is reimbursed by the auctioneers."

This man did not see that what he had written was absolute nonsense. To him there was no difference between *temporally* and *temporarily;* nor could he see that funds could not be advanced from seizures, but that they must be advanced from the products of seizures; and he was in like manner incapable of seeing that, although a man or a corporate body may be reimbursed, a sum is returned or refunded. *A man* is reimbursed by the return of money which he has laid out. Correspondence, every sentence of which will "parse," and every word of which is spelled correctly, is infested with a pestilent use of language like this. It is this department of language, not grammar and orthography, that needs attention.

With such misuses and perversions of words philology does not concern itself, although they furnish it in the end with some of the materials upon which it works. Now it is in the very field which philology passes by that I have labored. Into any higher realm of linguistic endeavor this book and its predecessor venture but rarely, and then only incidentally. Their chief purpose is the humbler one of striving to do what may be done to help their readers to use language reasonably, consistently, normally, and without coarseness on one side or affectation of elegance on the other, to do what may be done to check early perversion of language, which unchecked may pass into unrestrainable usage, as a pebble may turn aside or disperse a rill which might unchecked become a brook and then a river. That the first of these books has done something in this way, yet far too little, their writer has the satisfaction of knowing. He has seen that he has effected somewhat, and he hopes to effect somewhat more, toward diminishing the number of monstrosities in language which future philologists will have to record, to examine, and to endeavor to explain; and with that somewhat, be it little or much, he will, as to this small part of his life's work, be content.

R. G. W.

New York, *April*, 1880.

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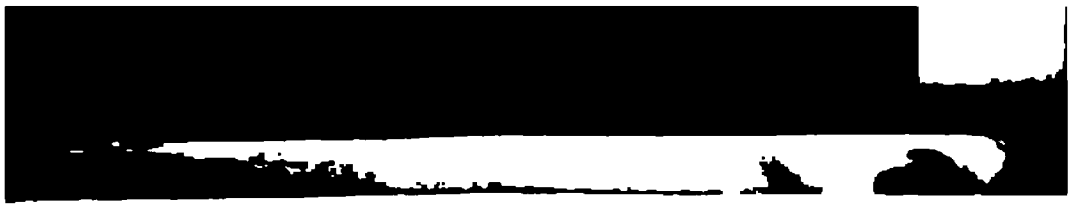

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EVERY-DAY ENGLISH.

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ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION: THE VOWELS.

A KINSWOMAN of mine, a lady who lives in the country, was looking for the coming of a woman whom she hired at odd times as a helper in housework; when, after some delay, a lank, shy girl appeared, and said that her mother could n't come, "'cause yes'day she was pickin' cherries on sheers, an' she fell down an' hurt herself scan'lous." The use of *scandalous* to express severity of bodily injury, although not in the highest style of English, may be passed over for the present; and certainly the elegant people who use *awful* to express a great degree of excellence or of pleasure, as in "awfully nice," and "awfully pretty," and even "awfully jolly," would, on Christian principles, have to cast out a very considerable beam from their own eyes before picking at this mote in the eye of their humble sister. We are concerned now with the conditions on which she said that her mother was picking cherries. It was "on sheers," a kind of payment not uncommon in the rural districts.

The custom now among the best speakers is to say *shares*, not *sheers;* but are we therefore to infer that this girl pronounced s h a r e *sheer*, or, to put the

question more simply and concisely, that she gave [illegible] the *letter s* the *sound of the letter s*? I am sure th[at] she did not; and for the very good reason that n[either] ther she nor her mother ever saw the word *share*, n[or] that had they seen it they would not have know[n] what it was; for they could not read. (And, by t[he] bye, I doubt that, their condition in life being wh[at] it was, they were therefore any the less virtuous [or] even the less happy.) The girl called her mothe[r] part of the fruit of such work a "*sheer*" because h[er] mother so called it, and the mother did so for t[he] same reason; and so back through generations, [no] one of whom probably could read or spell, and wh[o] therefore could not be said to give *s* the sound of *s*.

But this word, this vocal sound which is indicat[ed] by the characters *s h a r e*, has during all these g[en]erations been written in other ways, and in fact [is] now so written; for example, *sheer* and *shire*. [It] is written in the last way in the name of the pa[rt] of the country in which these people lived, — Mo[n]mouthshire, New Jersey. A shire is merely th[e] part of a country which is cut off — that is, sheare[d] — from the rest. Indeed, if etymology and lo[cal] usage are of any authority, this word, which [is] the Anglo-Saxon *scire*, is more properly *sheer* th[an] *share*. I have not traced the changes step by step, but it would seem that the change, which until re[-]cently had taken place only among literate people, [is] owing to the change in the pronunciation of *i* and *e*. Some centuries ago the former had, as it has no[w] on the continent of Europe, the sound of our moder[n] English *e*, and the latter had the sound, or nearl[y] the sound, of our modern English *a*. So *shire* came to be written *sheer*, and *sheer* to be pronounced an[d]

then written *snare*. But it would be difficult, if not impossible, I think, to be accurate in any such deduction; for even in Anglo-Saxon times there seems to have been some uncertainty upon this point.

Mere uncertainty as to pronunciation may, however, be disregarded in the consideration of the present subject: the confusion of sounds and of letters is the only important matter. This has obtained, it need hardly be said, in many other words; for example, *chair*, which most of us have heard pronounced *cheer* by some people. And among the people who have so pronounced it was Shakespeare, in one passage of whose writings the reading is made ambiguous by this confusion. In "Macbeth," Act V., Scene 3, the usurper says, according to the earliest copy, the folio of 1623, —

"This push
Will cheere me ever or diseate me now."

Some editors read "cheer me," others "chair me;" but the alternative phrase, "or disseat me," seems to me to leave no room for doubt that "chair me" is what Shakespeare meant. There seems, however, to be as little doubt that he also meant a punning suggestion of *cheer*, and that the form in which the word appears in the folio is a mere phonographic irregularity of spelling.

It is highly probable, indeed, that Shakespeare called a chair a *cheer*, but this passage does not make it absolutely certain that he did so; for the question arises, How did he pronounce *cheer*? There is very good reason for believing that in numerous words in which we use the sound of our modern English *e* he used that of our modern English *a*; the written letter being constantly *e*.

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ney classes with the former, a somewhat flattened sound has of late prevailed. In *blaspheme*, which he also ranges with them, the best usage fluctuates between the *ah* sound and that of *an*. In *plant* the latter sound prevails; and in *gape* which he says he learned to pronounce *gahp* (as I did), the change has gone further, and it now has the name sound of *a* and rhymes with *rape*, the noun *gap* having of course the flattened sound of *a* in *rap*. Notwithstanding the soundness of Professor Whitney's remark as to the *ah* sound, that "an *r* following it [*a*] in the same syllable has been with us the most efficient means of its preservation" (an observation previously made by Walker in almost the same words), it is a surprise to find him citing *are* among his illustrative examples. *Are* is now indeed pronounced *ahr*; but the *r* has not *preserved* the *ah* sound; for no fact in orthoëpy is more certain than that two hundred, and even one hundred and fifty, years ago *are* was pronounced *air*, and that George Withers in his manly verses wrote a perfect rhyme: —

> "Shall my cheeks grow wan with *care*
> 'Cause another's rosy *are*?"

Proofs in support of this might be produced by the hundred. The *ah* sound has not been *preserved* by the *r*; rather in spite of it pronunciation has fluctuated.

Remarking upon the short *e* sound, Professor Whitney cites as examples of it *let*, *felt*, *flesh*, *bread*, *said*, *says*, *jeopard*, *treachery*, *any*, all of which have that vowel sound, without a doubt, among the best speakers. And there could hardly be better examples to show that letters cannot justly be said to be "pronounced" thus or so. For here we have *e*, *ea*, *ai*,

o, and *a* all corresponding in written language to the same sound in the spoken. It is words that are pronounced, not letters. It is words as wholes that change in sound. No sane man pronounces *ea*, *ai*, *eo*, and *a* as short *e*.

A confession now surprises us. The writer says, "So far as I know, *any* and *many* are the only words in which an *a* is allowed to be pronounced as short *e*; but until I overcame the habit by a conscious effort, I always gave it the same sound in *plague*, *snake*, *naked*; nor did I escape the pronunciation of *catch* as *ketch*, — a deeply-rooted error, almost universal among children in this part of the world." The last error is common, not only among children, but among men and women, in all parts of the English-speaking world. It is the result of mere slovenliness, and of that disposition before mentioned to avoid opening the mouth, an act to the performance of which the English-speaking people seem to have developed a great and unhappily an increasing disinclination. The *a* in *catch* is moderately broad, like the *a* in *answer* and in *can*; and consequently it is "skimped" by all who are inclined to be slovenly. But that a person having the early associations of Professor Whitney should have caught such pronunciations as *pleg*, *snek*, and *nekked*, for *plague*, *snake*, and *naked*, is, as I have said, surprising. For in these words the vowel sound is the plain modern English *a*, which the most sluggish speaker has no occasion to make any "flatter" or "narrower" than it is already. *Pleg* I have, however, heard among such speakers; but *snek* and *nekked* are new English words to my ears. "*Leisure*," he says, "I have always called *lèisure* [that is *lèsure*], as do, I believe, most Americans." Many

Americans may, I believe do, so pronounce it; but I was taught to give its *ei* the sound of the same diphthong in *freight* and *obeisance*, — that is, *aye*. That this was its pronunciation on its introduction into the language, and that it continued to be so pronounced by the best English speakers until less than thirty years ago, I am quite sure, although Walker gives *leezure*, which of late has come to be its pronunciation by a large proportion of the best speakers.

The short *i* Professor Whitney finds to be the most common of English vowel sounds; and so it is if we except that vowel sound which only we hear in *some*, *culture*, *other*. And here we have another illustration of the truth that words are pronounced and change their pronunciation without regard to the letters with which they are written. For although this "short *i*" sound is represented most generally by *i*, it is found in the words *abyss*, *busy*, *minute*, *women*, *sieve*, *guilt*, and *build*, which are cited as examples by Professor Whitney himself. The theory of letter pronunciation requires us to believe that people pronounce *y*, *u*, *i*, *o*, *ie*, and *ui* just alike, and with the sound of *i* in *pin*. No one does so. We pronounce the words, without regard to the signs with which they are written.

Been, which Professor Whitney also cites as an example of the short *i* sound, has not that sound among speakers of good English, who give it the full *e* sound, as in *seen*. He adds, "*Been* is often uttered as *bĕn* in New England, as doubtless elsewhere, and I am not sure that I did not have to unlearn that pronunciation in early boyhood." *Ben*, which I have heard only from the most slovenly and uneducated speakers, is, I am inclined to think, confined to New

England, or to places into which it has been taken by some New England people; and *bin* is almost an Americanism, although it is heard rarely among some slovenly speakers of English birth and breeding. From full *e* (*ee*) to short *i*, as in *pin*, is the easiest of all transitions, and should by those who wish to speak the best English be watchfully guarded against, particularly in this word.

Hence, if for no other reason, I would not for a moment imply that the pronunciation *bin* is an evidence of want of culture or of inferior associations. Nor do I in this instance, or in any other, set up my own pronunciation as a standard for others. Far from it. Indeed, I do not know that I have any standard myself. How to pronounce a word is the last thing of which I should think. I am here only considering a subject to which I have given much attention in a general way for some years, and which appears to have now for many readers an unusual degree of interest. I propose no more than to offer some of the results of my studies and of my observation of others. That observation, I repeat, in the case of Englishmen as to whose culture and position there could be no question, is that the best English pronunciation of *been* makes it a perfect rhyme with *seen*.

The many protests which I received against this opinion on its first publication make it proper that I should refer to evidence upon the subject which it would be hard to gainsay, and which is all the more valuable because it is indirect. The noting of an exception proves a rule; and what the rule is as to *been* has been thus shown by more than one recent English writer. For example, in "Hero Carthew," a novel by Louisa Parr, those personages who are of the class

of "gentry" say *been*, but those of an inferior class say *bin*. Thus an old sailor says: "'Thankee, sir, I ain't much of a hand at speechifying, though always having *bin* in the carpenter's crew; . . . . so the cap'n can tell you, as has often spoke up for me before when the wind 's *bin* pretty stiff up there.'" (Chap. xxvi.) This marking of *bin* as exceptional is proof sufficient that according to the observation of this English novelist the *been* of her people of higher position and culture had not the sound of short i, and did not rhyme with *sin*. I have remarked the same distinction in the works of other English writers; but this is sufficient for our present purpose.

At the same time it should be said that the pronunciation *bin* would not necessarily be regarded as an evidence of want of culture in the best English society; but, if noticed at all, it might be looked upon as an evidence of Americanism in speech, although *ben* is more generally so regarded. The pronunciation *bin* is of long standing. John Wallis, mathematical professor at Oxford, protested against it in his "Grammatica Linguæ Anglicanæ," 1653, as contrary to the analogy of our language.[1] It is worthy of remark that in the novel which I have cited, "Hero Carthew," the personages of inferior position not only say *bin*, but use expressions which are generally regarded as Americanisms of New England origin. For example: "'My dear life!' exclaimed the woman, dropping a succession of courtesies. '*Well, I never did!*'" (Chap. ii.) "'If so be now I 'd a got anybody to give me a boost up, ... she 'd take me *right off the reel*.'" (Chap. xxvi.) "'I

[1] "Similiter autem *bin* pro *been* eodem errore, quo nonnunquam *sin* pro *seen*, ... utrobique contra analogiam linguæ; sed usu defenditur."

hope you find yourself *pretty middlin'*, ma'am, and that you left Sir Stephen,'" etc. (Chap. xxxviii.)

As to "American" usage, whether in the East, the West, the North, or the South, its weight in the decision of a point of orthoëpy is nothing; it is not to be regarded, for reasons which will appear hereafter. The dictionaries of Webster and Worcester, which have been trained upon me like two great guns, are both very useful guides in pronunciation to those who need a guide; but I venture to say that they are not infallible (if indeed infallibility is to be considered as attainable on this subject), and also that they cannot be accepted as authoritative, except where they record the best English usage. Smart is deservedly held in high esteem in England, and is the most widely known of all English orthoëpists; but according to my observation, the most trustworthy guide is the Rev. P. H. Phelp, of Cambridge University, England, who is responsible for the pronunciation given in Stormonth's dictionary, to the great value of which there is eminent British testimony. But if I should find that either Smart or Phelp gave *bin* as the proper pronunciation of *been*, I could only say that his observation of the best English speech differed in this respect from mine. I find, however, that Mr. Phelp gives *been* with the sound of *e* as in *mete;* which, I repeat, is the pronunciation that I have heard from all the well-bred and well-educated Englishmen that I have met.

It has been supposed by some persons that the pronunciation of *been* with the short *i* sound has the support of Elizabethan usage, because the word is found in the irregular spelling of that and of preceding and subsequent times printed *bin*, of which spelling there

are countless instances. In the first place, the spelling itself has no determining value. For in the same book the word is often found spelled *bin*, *ben*, *been* and *beene*, two or even three varieties of its form appearing together on the same page.[1] Moreover, this

[1] In the Paston Letters, although they extend through such a long period [illegible] and various hands, I have [illegible] *ben*, *bene*, and *been*, never *bin*. [illegible] the best book referred to in [illegible] the earliest edition known is dated [illegible] *ben* [illegible] times, but the pronunciation of the writer [illegible] *bene*, which occurs twenty-four times. In the [illegible] I find *bin*, *bene*, and *beene*.

"[illegible] I would assent
[illegible] in their curst [illegible]."

(II. 291, v. 47.)

"[illegible] he saw his nephews both to *bene*
[illegible] years so yet unfit to rule."

(II. 385, v. 10.)

Sir Arthur Gorges, [illegible], leaves us no doubt as to what his pronunciation of the word was.

"The small figures daily *beene*
[illegible] not so fearful *beene*."

(Pharsalia, Lib. III., p. 102.)

"[illegible] *beene*.
No [illegible] slaughters then had *beene*."

(The same, Lib. VI., p. 220.)

Gorges also has *bin* [illegible], as will be seen by the note on page 19, the word *in*, with which it rhymes, was pronounced *een*.

"That earst to him had faithful *bin*
And in this state he now was *in*."

(The same, Lib. VIII., p. 318.)

It may be remarked that it was the habit of writers of that time to make their rhyming words conform, if possible, in spelling as well as in sound. In the first edition of the authorized translation of the Bible (1611) I have remarked only the forms *bene* and *beene*. Milton, on the other hand, believe always spells this word *bin*.

"With what besides, in Counsel or in Fight,
Hath *bin* achieved of merit."

(Paradise Lost, Book II., l. 20, ed. 1667.)

"Oh for that warning voice . . . .
. . . . . that now
While time was, our first Parents had *bin* warned
The coming of their secret foe."

(Book IV., ll. 1-7.)

supposition disregards the important fact that *i* was then very commonly pronounced with the sound of our modern English *e*. Indeed, *i* and *e*, and even *ee*, were used interchangeably in the spelling of words which had the full English *e* sound. For example, *quire* and *queere* (choir), *frize* and *freeze* (rough cloth), *sprite* and *spreet* (spirit), *brize* and *breeze* (the insect), *rice* and *rees*; and we even have *nine* and *neen*, *he* and *high* (remark the pronunciation of *highlands*, *hielands*). To go further back, we have in Chaucer's "Romaunt of the Rose:" —

> "Full faire was Mirthe, full long and *high*;
> A fairer man I never *sigh*."

Here *sigh* stands for *see*, and *high* was pronounced *hie* or *hee*. And to come down to the days of the Restoration, Etherege says in "Sir Fopling Flutter," ed. 1676, that certain sins are "vices too *gentile* for a shoomaker;" and in "The Gentile Sinner, or England's Brave Gentleman," by Clement Ellis, Fellow of Queen's College Oxon, 1660, if the meaning of the title were not plain enough, we should learn it from various passages like this: "Whatever others better bred or of a more *gentile* education may think of him." (Page 45.) Indeed, I could at short notice produce hundreds of examples to the same effect.[1]

In Charles Butler's English Grammar, 1634, I find in the index *bene* and *bin* interchanged: one about as often as the other. Surely it is unnecessary to illustrate this point further. Nor would it have been done here even at this length, were it not that in addition to what Professor Whitney has said upon it, Professor Lounsbury, also of Yale College, has seriously made this old spelling *bin* a *quasi* justification of the pronunciation *bin*, and the ground of an argument for spelling reform. See *Scribner's Magazine*, October, 1879.

[1] Here are a few of marked character and significance: —

> "There lives within the very flame of love
> A kind of *wecke* [wick] or snuffe that will abate it."
>
> (Hamlet, quarto of 1604, Act IV., Scene 7.)

For this reason, therefore, if for no other, the frequent appearance of *bin* in our earlier literature would give no support to the pronunciation at any time of *been* with the short sound of *i*.

The vowel sound in *meet*, *free*, *meat*, *been*, *field*, we call long *e*, and it now is so; but it is the thin *i* of Shakespeare's day and of Milton's. Professor Whitney more than once mentions *pique* as an example of this sound. It is so certainly; but if it is brought forward as an example of the English pronunciation of *i* with the continental sound of that letter (our

> "Strong Enobarbe
> Is weaker than the Wine; and mine own tongue
> *Spleets* [splits] what it speakes."
> (Antony and Cleopatra, fol. 1623, Act II., Scene 7.)
>
> "Why should they such dominion *seeke*
> As never yet was heard the *like*?"
> (Sir Arthur Gorges' Lucan's Pharsalia, 1614, Book II.)

And that this was no chance imperfect rhyme is shown by its repetition.

> "Or that the wooddy shades I *seeke*
> Let him (there panting) do the *like*."
> (The same, Book IX.)

> "*Lady Mary.* Unless he be a gentleman, and Bonville
> Is by his birth no less.
> *Audley.* Such only *gentile* are that can maintain
> *Gentily*"

(Thos. Heywood, The Royal King and Loyal Subject, 1637, Act III., Scene 1.)

Nor does Wallis (cited above) leave us without testimony as to the Oxford pronunciation two centuries and a quarter ago of *sin* and *in* and other words which now have the short obscure sound of *i*, — testimony which deprives the mere spelling *bin* of any weight as evidence that the word thus spelled had any other vowel sound than that of *ee*.

"*Ee*, i extie. Hunc sonum, quoties correptus est, Angli per *i* breve exprimunt, quum vero producitur scribunt ut plurimum per *ee*, non raro tamen per *ie*, vel etiam per *ea*. Ut *sit*, sedeo, *see't*, id video; *fit*, idoneus; *feet*, pedes; *fill*, impleo; *feel*, tactu sentio; *field*, ager, *still*, semper quietus; *steel*, chalybs, *ill*, malus; *eel*, anguilla; *in*, in; *inne*, hospitium; *sin* peccatum, *seen*, visum; *friend*, amicus; *fiend*, cacodæmon; *near*, prope *dear*, charus, *hear*, audio," etc.

See also my *Memorandums of English Pronunciation in the Elizabethan Era*, referred to on page 38.

long *e*), we must remember that *pique* is a French word of comparatively late introduction into our language, — so late that it still retains its French pronunciation. Except *shire*, no really English word occurs to me in which simple *i* has now the continental *ee* sound; and *shire* has it only in combination.

The words in which *i* has this sound, *e. g.*, *antique*, *pique*, *intrigue*, *fatigue*, *caprice*, *machine*, *mutine*, *marine*, *quarantine*, are all lately introduced from the French; and of French words in which *i* used to have this sound, *profile*, *oblige*, *oblique*, are now pronounced with the English *i* by the best speakers. *Canine* and *rapine* have the French sound generally; but in this respect they are in process of change to the English sound of *i*.

An example of a French word now in the course of transition is *trait*, which we in this country pronounce like an English word, with the final *t*, to rhyme with *bait* and *wait;* but in the best English society it is still pronounced as a French word, *tray*, although it has been in the language a hundred and fifty years. In this instance I do not hesitate to say that I think English usage very un-English. When a foreign word has been transplanted into our speech and has taken firm root there, it should be thoroughly Englished. So, for instance, we should say *indexes* and *memorandums*, not *indices* and *memoranda*. But *trait* with a final *t* would sound very strange to a well-educated Englishman, and would entirely deprive Dr. Doran's book, "Table Traits, with Something on Them," of the significant pun in its title.

One of the principal objects of Professor Whitney's paper is to arrive at the elements of English pronunciation, and at the proportions in which the various

sounds of vowel and consonant are heard in English speech. When, therefore, he says that "the most frequent representatives of *i* [that is, long *e* = *ee*] in English, besides those instanced above, are *ie*, as in *yield*, or *ei* after *c*, as in *receive*, *conceit*, or *ey* final, as in *key*," he leaves, I think, an erroneous impression on the mind of his reader. He seems to pass by the multitude of words in which *ea* has the sound in question. True, he mentions *meat*, but merely as an example of the vowel sound in question. This sound is really one of the most common in our speech, and it is chiefly so because of those words which are written with *ea*, to which those in *ei*, or even those in *ee*, are as nothing. It would also have been at least interesting and instructive to many of his readers if he had brought the fact to their attention that all these words in *ei*, and all or nearly all those in *ea*, were not long ago pronounced with the English name sound of *a* which is still heard in *freight* and in *great*. Words spelled with *ei*, like *receive* and *conceit*, had that sound, as for example in Butler's couplet, —

"Some have been wounded with *conceit*,
And died of mere opinion *straight*;"

in which there is no doubt that the rhyme was to contemporary English ears perfect. And even in *people* and *ægis*, which he cites as sporadic cases of the *ee* sound, we may be sure as to the first that the present Irish pronunciation, *payple*, is the old English one which prevailed in the Elizabethan era and later, although as to *ægis* we must be content with knowing that it ought to have the *aye* sound, although it has not. *Shire*, he says, has the *ee* sound only in "America." On the contrary, it always has that sound in England in such words as Devonshire, Warwickshire,

Just as it has here. As a word by itself, it is pro-*nounced* to rhyme with *fire;* and that sound I believe *it has* here when it is used. But we usually say *unty*. Professor Whitney's use of "shire town" impressed me at the first blush as rather singular.

CHAPTER II.

THE VOWELS (CONTINUED).

ALTHOUGH I intended no discussion of Professor Whitney's phonetical principles, I cannot readily accept his theory of the development of the "broad *a*" or *au* sound; that which we have in *all* and in *awe*. This he regards as the product of "the next degree of labial closure" after that of the "short *o*" sound which we have in *not* and in *what*. According to him, the order of progressive closeness is shown in the vowel sounds of *what*, *war*, *hole*, *full*, and *fool*. This seems to be correct except in regard to the first two sounds, — those of *what* and *war*. He regards the latter as "a step further from the neutral *a* (*far*)" than the former is. This it may be; but that it is the product of an increased labial closure does not seem so clear. It is the product of a different form of the organs, and is narrower than the *a* in *far* and *father*; but if there is a difference in breadth between it and the vowel sound of *what*, it seems to me that the *war* sound is broader than the *what* sound. Let the vowel sound of *not* and *what* be uttered, and the organs kept in the position required for its utterance, and then let the vowel sound of *war* and *all* be uttered, and it will be found that the lips open, instead of contracting; the mouth becomes less narrow, more rounded; the jaw drops slightly, and the root of the tongue does the same

s it has here. As a word by itself, it is pro-
ed to rhyme with *fire;* and that sound I believe
here when it is used. But we usually say
. Professor Whitney's use of "shire town"
sed me at the first blush as rather singular.

same pronunciation, although we should still write the word *law*.

A case in point is the word *vase*. Fifty years ago, and even later, the most common pronunciation of that word in "the best society" was *vawse*. It is now called *vahse* or *vayse;* the pronunciation of it to rhyme with *case* and *race*, although frequently heard, is not admitted in polite society. But its *aw* sound — an affected one — although once a sort of shibboleth of that society, is now no longer heard. Scholars and students of art now call it *vahse;* but good usage, if not the best, among the unlearned seems to be inclining to *vayse*. In *extraordinary*, or, as Mr. Yellowplush wrote it, "*igstrawnry*," we cannot rightly be said to pronounce *aor* as *awr*. The effort required for the separation of *a* from *o* — *extra-ordinary* — has merely caused the dropping of the first vowel, and we say *extr'ordinary*.

In regard to this broad *a* sound, Professor Whitney surprises me by remarking that as to many words which have the sound, "it would be easy by drawling and distorting the utterance even a very little to make some of them seem ungraceful and vulgar, and I would say the same of *God* and *dog*, and their like, in which many persons certainly give the short *o* sound of *not*." Unless I misunderstand this, it implies that the received pronunciation of *God* and *dog* is to give the vowels the broad *aw* sound, and to say *Gawd* and *dawg*. I can hardly believe that Professor Whitney calls a dog a *dawg*, more than I can believe he calls it a *dorg*. It is true that many persons do so pronounce the word, and so many small persons solicit us in the afternoon to buy a *New-eesh* or a *Pow-eest* meaning *News* and *Post*. The proper

pronunciation of *dog* makes it rhyme with *log*, or (as some persons do pronounce the latter *laug*), it were better to say, with *hog*, which, except in the most relaxed Southern speech, I never heard called *haug*.

Professor Whitney tells us that "in the regular and authorized pronunciation of English there is no such thing in accented syllables as a true short *o*," an assertion which I am not inclined or ready to dispute. But to this succeeds a passage which, if I understand the writer, is so surprising that I give it in full: —

"The sound, however, is a well-recognized element of New England utterance in a very small number of words, — whether and how far outside of New England and its colonies, and whether at all on the other side of the ocean, I cannot say. By it *none* is as perfectly distinguished from *known* as is *full* from *fool* and *sin* from *seen*; and in these two words (although *none* is often pronounced like *nun*, even in New England) the sound most frequently appears. The list of words in which it is given varies, I think, not a little in different individuals; in my own practice it is nearly or quite restricted to *none*, *whole*, *home*, *stone*, *smoke*, *folks*, *coat*, *toad*, *throat*; I have heard most often from others, in addition, *bone* and *boat*."

If I do not misapprehend this passage, the writer means to say that among the best New England speakers the nine words mentioned, from *none* to *throat*, have the same vowel sound, and that that sound is not long *o* or simple *o* in any one of them. Of course we cannot suppose for a moment that Professor Whitney means that he and his friends say *hull*, *hum*, *stun*, and the like. This we might be sure of, even if he had not strangely told us by way of warning and exception that "*none* is often pro-

nounced like *nun*, even in New England"! But none the less it is clear that he declares that among the best New England speakers *home*, *stone*, *folks*, *coat*, *cloak*, *toad*, and *throat* have not the long simple *o* sound. I can only say that among such New England people as Professor Whitney seems to have mingled with from his boyhood I never heard these seven words uttered with any other sound than that of long *o*, which is also that given to them by the best English speakers. They have the long *o* of *note* and *moat*, which Professor Whitney tells us differs from the sound just treated in being a longer and a somewhat closer utterance. This may possibly be true as to *whole*, but it is so in none of the others; and even as to that I have observed that the best English speakers, and according to my observation the best in "America," are rather particular to avoid any leaning toward *hull* by a somewhat marked insistence upon the *o*, making not the slightest difference between *whole* and *hole*. Of this, the following passage in Carlyle's Edinburgh inaugural address happens to be plain proof: "We have in Scotch, too, 'hole' and its derivatives; and I suppose our English word 'whole' (with a *w*), all of one piece, without any *hole* in it, is the same word." As to *none*, not only is it often pronounced like *nun* in New England (that being its pronunciation by the best English speakers), but, unless I am in error, the number of educated New Englanders who give it any other sound, or (remembering the speech of people elderly in my youth, I do not hesitate to say) who for fifty years and more have given it any other sound, is very small indeed; so small that they have escaped my observation entirely, although I have been led to believe that my sensitive

ness to sounds is somewhat more than usually delicate.

As to the conversion of long *o* into short *u*, the obscure vowel sound in *none* and *nun*, very remarkable testimony has come to me from a Boston correspondent, — a Yankee of Connecticut birth, — who writes about the pronunciation of words like *stone*. He says, "The sound commonly given them is neither *ō* nor *ŭ*, but nearly *ō-ŭ*, pronounced very quickly and run together," which I do not quite apprehend or understand; and he adds, "As to the pronunciation *stun*, etc., I have *never* heard it; not even from a hill farmer or a rural school-boy." This, coming, as it does, from an intelligent and observant man, who has evidently given this subject no little attention, will astonish many others besides myself; for it seems to me that no one could have been at any time in rural New England without hearing the pronunciation *stun* once for every stone he saw in the fences. All this, however, illustrates the difficulty which I have heretofore pointed out as inherent in this subject, — that it is almost impossible for one person to express to another by signs the sound of any word. Only the voice is capable of that; for the moment a sign is used the question arises, What is the value of that sign? The sounds of words are the most delicate, fleeting, and inapprehensible things in nature; far more so than the tones of music, whether made by the human voice or by instruments. Moreover, the question arises as to the capability to apprehend and distinguish sounds on the part of the person whose evidence is given.

As to the "true short *u*," I find in Professor Whitney's dissertation what appear to me to be some her-

esies, but they are perhaps the result of a lack of fine distinction of sounds, which causes the writer to misrepresent somewhat his own utterance. He tells us that this "short *u*" sound is heard in *full*, *bosom*, *could*, and *good*, and that "it stands related to its corresponding long in *fool*, *rule*, *move*, etc., precisely as the *i* of *sin* to that of *seen*." But the vowel sound of the first syllable of *bosom* in the received pronunciation of the best speakers is surely not the vowel sound either of *full* or of *good* and *could*. It is the full long *u* or *oo* sound, as if the word were written *boosom*. If *full* were pronounced with the vowel sound of the first syllable of *bosom*, it would rhyme perfectly with *fool*. Nor can I accept the pronunciation of *does dooz* by some New England people — among whom Professor Whitney says he is "naturally" — as containing the vowel sound of *foot*, to which he likens it. That sound of *does* is merely that of *do* with the added *s* of inflection, and *do* has the pure long *u* or *oo* sound; while that of *foot* is quite another, shorter and "closer."

Of the few words that have the short *u* sound Professor Whitney may be quite right in saying that a part of them are recent corruptions from the long *u* sound; but he impairs the value of his remark by adding, "like that which, as above noticed, has converted *whōle* and *hōme* into *whŏle* and *hŏme*;" for *whole* and *home* have the pure long *o* sound. But he is right in saying that the change appears to be still going on, and that "*rood*, *roof*, and *root* are words in which one often hears the short instead of the long sound; and *root* especially is very widely and commonly pronounced like *foot*." I have even heard a very highly educated person, whose English is gen-

erally irreproachable, call a *spoon* a *spun*. This is the result of the English tendency to vowel compression before remarked upon. As to *rood*, *roof*, and *root*, however, they at least cannot be reckoned among the "recent" corruptions from long *u*; nor shall I assume that Professor Whitney's remark necessarily implies that they are so. These words all formerly had the pure open *o* sound, and were written *rode*, *rofe*, and *rote*. Readers of Chaucer will remember the first lines of the Prologue to the "Canterbury Tales:"—

> "Whan that Aprille with his schoures *swote*
> The drought of Marche hath perced to the *rote*."

In some — most of the best — manuscripts of the "Tales" we find *soote* and *roote*, and this is the reading preferred by Morris; but the doubling of the *o* was only an early device to attain conformity between the sign and the sound, which proved vain, as it ever must, I think. All the words so spelled have come to that pure sound of *u* (the continental, not the English *u*) of which in fact the distinctive sign in English is now *oo*. Another instance this, and a very marked one, of entire irrelation between letters and pronunciation; for what phonetic incongruity could be more manifest at a glance than, for example, the indication of the sound heard in the first syllable of *rural* by the union of two *o*'s?

In his discussion of the pure long *u* sound (as in *rule*, *food*, etc.), Professor Whitney remarks that the pronunciation of *wound*, a bodily injury, "is a bone of contention." There is variation in usage as to this word; but a large majority of the best speakers pronounce it with the long *u* or *oo* sound, — *woond*. I have heard of one of the minority who, being remonstrated with by a lady for his pronunciation, and

asked, "Why don't you call that word *woond?*" replied, "Madam, I have never foond sufficient groond that it should have that soond." If he had been a Scotchman, he would have foond it. Professor Whitney thinks, and with reason, that the long *u* pronunciation of this word should be encouraged, to establish a distinction between it and *wound* from *wind*.

And here I will remark upon a very common and very ridiculous mistake as to this word. We find in novels and sketches, and even in poetry, such phrases as "a horn was wound," "he wound his horn," and in plays such stage directions as "a horn wound in the distance," and many people use the same or a like phrase in their ordinary talk. An example is furnished by the first stanza of Chatterton's "Death of Sir Charles Bawdin," in the spurious Rowley Poems:

> "The feathered songster chaunticleer
> Han wounde his bugle horne,
> And tolde the earlie villager
> The comynge of the morne."

A notion seems to prevail that the phrase "winding a horn" is an expression of the undulating, melodic effect of a horn, and particularly of that effect when it is "wound in the distance." But the winding of a horn is the giving it wind; and in the line of the old song, "The huntsman is winding, is winding, is winding his horn," the words do not mean, as most people seem to think, that the huntsman is producing a lovely and "romantic" sound, but merely that he is applying his lips to the mouth-piece, puffing out his cheeks, and blowing wind into the instrument. Thus in Chapman's play, 'The Widow's Tears,' Act IV., Scene 2, we have—

— "you lament
As did the Satyre once that ran affrighted
From the hornes sound that he himselfe had *winded*."

Chatterton's blundering use of *wound* for *winded* was one of the many plain proofs of his forgery.[1] A ball of thread, a watch, is wound; a horn is *winded*, that is, given wind; the huntsman is *wind-ing*, not *wine-ing*, his horn, for it is as absurd to say that a man wound a horn as to say that he blew up, instead of wound up, a clock that had run down.

Every person who has given even a little attention to phonetics must know that the English *u* is a diphthong, formed by the union of the English *e* with the pure, or *oo*, sound of *u*. Thus the sound of *duke*, *pure*, and like words is *de-ook*, *pe-oor*, etc.; the *e* being the long *e*, but touched very briefly, very lightly. This *e* sound being that of *i* in the classical and continental languages, the introduction of it before another letter is called the iotizing of that letter; from *iota*, the Greek name of *i*. How long the English *u* has been iotized in certain combinations seems to me very difficult to determine. I am inclined to believe that the introduction of the *e* (or *i*) sound is comparatively recent. The pure sound of *u*—that which is common to all languages—occurs in English words which are spelled with *u*, *ou*, *o*, and *oo*; for example, *rule*, *uncouth*, *wound*, *do*, *fool*. Professor Whitney remarks that words of the *o* class which have this sound have evidently changed their *o* sound for a *u* in comparatively recent times. This may be accepted as generally true; the "un*toe* him," which we sometimes, although very rarely, hear from un-

[1] Another appears in this stanza: the use, in the second line, of *hee* (as old contracted plural form of *have*) with a singular nominative.

educated persons, being doubtless a relic of the old pronunciation of *to*. Nevertheless it is to be remarked that a pure *u* (or *oo*) sound in some words written with *o* is of considerable antiquity. In Shakespeare's time *Rome* was pronounced *room* (a point as to which in my edition of the poet's works I expressed some doubt); and *gold* was pronounced *goold* by many educated persons even in the last generation. Walker gives both *gold* and *goold*, and says, "It is much to be regretted that the second sound of this word is grown much more frequent than the first." I am inclined to think that it had not become more common, but that, on the contrary, it was in Walker's time slowly yielding, and has now yielded, to the pure sound of *o*. If this be the case, it merely furnishes another example of the fact that we pronounce words, not letters.

There is, however, very little difficulty or disagreement as to the pronunciation of words of the *o* class which have the pure *u* or *oo* sound. It is in regard to the English or iotized *u* that there is uncertainty and disagreement, — a disagreement which is, or was, a shibboleth of cultivated speech. The Turveydrops of language would turn with scorn from a man who pronounced *due* or *dew* with the pure *u* sound, as *do* or *too*. And according to my observation, those words, and some others, as *duty*, *new*, *stew*, etc., are pronounced by the best speakers invariably with the iotized *u*. With some people a preceding *d* is softened by the iotized *u* into *j*; so that I heard one of these persons, who had prejudice against the Hebrew race, object with savage wit to residence at Bath on Long Island, that he found the place would not suit him, because of the depressing dampness, — the morning and the evening Jews.

The introduction of the *e* (or *i*) before *u* is, however, difficult after *r*, *s*, or *l*. *R*, indeed, seems to be quite destructive of the English *u*, which after that consonant is always pronounced *oo*. The effect of the English *u* in *rude* or *rule*, for instance, is as ridiculous as its utterance is difficult. And I am surprised at seeing that Professor Whitney, who of course recognizes this difficulty and the consequent law of orthoepy, includes *fruit*, *brew*, and *rheum* among his examples of words having the long *u* sound "more or less mixed with a preceding *i* or *y* sound;" his other examples being *duty*, *pure*, *due*, *feud*, *few*, and *stew*. According to my observation, the best usage requires absolutely the iotized *u* (*e-oo*) in the last six words; but as absolutely the pure *u*, or *oo*, sound in *fruit*, *rheum*, and *brew*. Well-bred people do not laugh at each other's speech; but I think that if any vagary of pronunciation would provoke among such people an internal smile which might become visible, it would be the pronunciation of *fruit* and *brew* as *fre-oot* and *bre-oo*. This I have never heard;[1] but I have heard from a few persons of some culture, but more affectation, a like pronunciation of *column* — *colyume*. Professor Whitney seems, however, to have detected an intermediate sound between the pure *u* or *oo* and the iotized *u* (*e-oo* or *you*); for he says, in discrimination, "In my usage, and in that of those who pronounce with me, there is no intermediate sound or compromise whatever between a pure *u*, the vowel sound of *food* and *move*, and an absolute *yu*, in which the *y* element is as distinctly uttered as it would be if it were written. The general rule with us, as with the best, is that the *y* sound is prefixed; and the excep-

[1] The Yankee *u* is not an iotized *u*. See subsequent remarks upon it

tional cases, in which the *y* is omitted and the *u* left pure, are those in which the *u* is so preceded that the insertion of the semi-vowel between it and its predecessor is phonetically difficult." To this rule there seems to me to be neither objection nor exception. Nor have I ever remarked, and I admit that, possibly from lack of sufficient delicacy of ear or of speech, I cannot conceive, an intermediate sound between the pure and the iotized *u*. An attempt to introduce it would, in my opinion, be an affectation that would result in laughable disaster.

This iotized *u*, which, as I have already remarked, is in my opinion of comparatively late introduction, I believe to have taken the place of the genuine old English *u*; and the sound of that letter I believe to have been the Yankee *u* as heard in *view*, in *true*, in *pure*, and in *fruit*. This sound has been entirely misapprehended and absurdly caricatured. The stage Yankee, even in America, utters instead of it a sound which is quite as unlike it as either the pure *u* (or *oo*) or the iotized *u* (or *you*) is, — a snarling, nasal *yeaou*. But the real Yankee *u* is a simple sound, pure and clean of all admixture, and particularly so with regard to any nasality. It is very difficult of utterance by those who have not flexible organs of speech, and who have not caught it among those by whom it is used unconsciously. It would have been heard in perfection from many a well-educated Yankee of two generations past in his reading of Johnson's couplet: —

"Let observation with extensive view
Survey mankind from China to Peru."

He would have given the same *u* sound in *Peru* and in *view*; but he would not have said *Pe-reoo* in the one case, nor *voo* in the other, as some people seem to

think that he would have said. His vowel would have had no trace of *e* (or *i*), and yet it would not have been the pure or continental *u*. To express it by signs of any certain value at present is quite impossible; and I am therefore altogether unable to convey to my readers in type any suggestion of its sound, or to describe it, except by saying that it was, or rather is, something between the French *u* and the pure *oo*, and that so far from being a sneaking, nasal sound it is remarkably free, open, and firm.[1] But thousands of my readers must have heard it, and there are tens of thousands of people in New England at this day by whom it is uttered without any consciousness that they have any peculiarity of speech. I know a gentleman of unusual intelligence, culture, and refinement in New York, whose *u* is invariably this Yankee *u* in perfection. This *u* sound I believe to have passed into the modern English iotized *u* since the Elizabethan period; at which time, I believe, *u* had but two sounds, this (now Yankee) one and the pure *oo* sound. The obscure, nondescript sound which is now heard in *mud*, *curly*, *ugly*, *young*, was then, I believe, unknown; words of that class having been pronounced at that time with the pure *u* sound, *mood*, *coorl*, *oogly*,

[1] Three years and more after the first publication of this passage in the *Century* I had the pleasure of talking with Mr. Alexander Ellis upon the subject of pronunciation, or rather of listening as he talked. I brought this Yankee *u* to his attention. He was very much interested in it. The sound, he said, was quite a new one to him. He made me repeat it again and again in various words, seeking to get the sound pure and simple, without the effect of a preceding consonant in the word itself, or at the end of the word immediately before it. This is extremely difficult; but at last I thought of

"The ewe and lamb together play."

Ewe is the only word in the language in which this *u* sound is heard unmodified by a consonant, and this line is the only one containing it that I can remember in which the preceding word does not end with a consonant.

yoong. (See my "Memorandums of English Pronunciation in the Elizabethan Era," published in vol. xii. of my edition of Shakespeare, 1862, and reprinted in Ellis's "Early English Pronunciation," vol. ii., London, 1869.)

CHAPTER III.

CONSONANTS: THE BONES OF SPEECH.

Our examination of the sounds and the letters of the English language — an examination which does not profess to be either "scientific" or "exhaustive" — having carried us through the vowels to the Old English *u* and the New England *u*, only the consonants remain to engage our attention in this part of our subject. The nature of these elements of speech (most of which can hardly be called sounds, as we shall see), and the superficial purpose of our studies, will make this part of our task comparatively short. In using the word superficial, however, I imply its real and not necessarily its metaphorical meaning. For what we now concern ourselves about is the effect of the sounds of letters upon the pronunciation of words, rather than the manner in which those sounds are formed by the vocal organs. I pass by those physiological and even psychological relations and conditions which occupy so much of the attention of Professor Whitney, Mr. Bell, and others who make phonology a special study. And it is to be remarked that the science of phonology and the art of orthoëpy (if the right utterance of our mother tongue be properly an art, which I more than doubt) are related only because they are both concerned with spoken language. Orthoëpy is entirely independent of phonology, and phonology finds in orthoëpy only the ma-

terials upon which it works, which indeed it finds no less in cacoëpy.

Consonants are the bones of speech. By means of consonants we articulate our words; that is, give them joints. We sometimes find orthoëpists and phonologists speaking of the articulation of vowels, an expression which is not correct. We utter vowels, we articulate with consonants. If we utter a single vowel sound and interrupt it by a consonant, we get an articulation. Thus if in uttering the sound *ah* we momentarily interrupt it by *p*, we get an articulation, and have *apa*. If in addition to this interruption we intercept the vowel sound before its emission by *p*, we have *papa*. It is to be remarked that we utter no sound but that of *ah*. All else that we do is to prevent and to interrupt that sound by bringing the lips firmly together and opening them again. We articulate and make our two-syllable word by that solution of vowel continuity.

There is a story of a dialogue between two Lowland Scotchmen, a farmer and a tradesman, which illustrates our subject. The farmer takes up a fabric, and these questions and answers follow: —

"Oo?"

"Ay, oo."

"Ah oo?"

"Ay, ah oo."

"Ah ae oo?"

"Ay, ah ae oo."

That is, "Wool?" "Yes, wool." "All wool?" "Yes, all wool." "All one wool?" "Yes, all one wool." Those men had boned their words just as thoroughly as a cook ever boned a turkey to be served up in a soft, oval, and limbless shape upon a

upper table. But in the strict sense of the word this did not affect their articulation, because the words which they used were all monosyllables, and so had no joints. But the form and character of their words were seriously affected. For a consonant coming at the end or at the beginning, or at both the end and the beginning, of a monosyllable gives it strength and also clearness of outline.

Consonants thus not only give speech its articulations or joints, but they help words to stand and have form, just as the skeleton keeps the animal from falling into a shapeless mass of flesh. Therefore consonants are the bones of speech; and as the bones of animals have no active strength in themselves, but furnish the supports and the levers to which the organs of action, the muscles, are attached, so some consonants have no power of utterance in themselves, but merely serve as assistants or as modifiers of vowel utterance. Excepting exclamations, such as *ah*, *oh*, and the Greek αι, which can hardly be called words, there are very few words entirely without consonants. The French *eau*, strangely pronounced *oh*, is such a word; but it became so by the suppression, through the process of phonetic decay, of a very pronounced consonant, the *k* in the Latin *aqua*, from which it came by these stages: *aqua* — *aqva* — *ava* — *ave* — *eave* — *eaue* — *eau*. Thus, great as the changes were through which *aqua* passed, it took a thousand years of phonetic decay to deprive it entirely of all consonantal sound; for it was not until the fourteenth century that it passed from *eave* into *eaue*.[1] It is interesting to remark that there does not remain in this word, the real, the spoken word, one trace of its origi-

[1] See Brachet's *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Française.*

nal sound, either vowel or consonant. The words, that is, the vowel sounds, *eau* (*o*) and *aqua* have nothing whatever in common. Their connection, like that of many a human ancestor and descendant, is imperceptible and purely historical.

The number of vowel words, not only in any one language, but in all languages that have a literature, taken together, is very small. Expect almost as soon to see a vertebrate animal with a gristle skeleton, or none at all,[1] as a real word without a consonant. In English we have only two that I now remember — *you* and *I;* or, if we are to regard *yew* and *ewe*, *eye* and *aye*, as being phonologically other words, six. There may be others, but I am not able now to recollect them. The Romance languages, whose tendencies to vowel utterance are much stronger than those of the Teutonic languages, have more of such words, but even they have very few of them, and generally get them by the process of phonetic decay. In the only great French epic poem, the "Chanson de Roland," which, however, is in such old French that it is almost as easily read by an uneducated German or Englishman as by a Frenchman, unless he is a scholar, the combination *Aoi* appears at the close of many of the stanzas. Its significance thus far is undetermined by any consent of critics. It is not even certain that it is a word. I cannot but think that it is an exclamation of sorrow, a wail over the bloody defeat in Roncesvalles. If it be a word, being a trisyllable, it is noteworthy to us at present as the longest word known, I believe, without a consonant in any modern Indo-European language.

The consonant is the distinguishing element of ho

[1] Not quoted from Sir Boyle Roche.

man speech. Man has been defined in various ways, according to various attributes, functions, and habits. He might well be called the consonant-using animal. He alone of all animals uses consonants. It is the consonant which makes the chief difference between the cries of beasts and the speech of man. This distinguishing difference we recognize when we say that their cries are inarticulate. And so, when a man "makes a beast of himself" with strong drink, one of the first and most unmistakable signs of his condition is that his speech becomes inarticulate.

Attempting to express the cries of animals, we say, for example, that a sheep cries *baa*. But it is not so. That is only the best that we can do to express the sound of bleating. Close attention will enable any person with a delicate ear to perceive that the sheep utters only a compressed, attenuated, and vibrating *ah*, without any true consonantal sound; the seeming consonantal sound produced, however, being much more like *m* than like *b*. There is really, however, neither *m* nor *b*; only a sound which carelessly heard may be loosely expressed by *ba-a-a* or by *ma-a-a*. Nor does a cow produce a sound much like *moo*. Her lowing has some little semblance to the vowel sound of *moo*; but there is in it no consonantal sound whatever. What is represented by the *m* in *moo* is a kind of gulp. A beast possibly may, but no beast habitually does, produce even the nasal semi-vowel *m*.

In brief, the cries of all beasts are vowel cries. The mouth is opened before the sound is prepared, and it comes straight from the throat, without any modification — that is, intentional or significant modification — by tongue or lips. A beast cannot com-

press its lips closely enough to make even the sounds *baa*, or *maa*, or *moo*, which otherwise might be made by it involuntarily; and as to an intentional use of the tongue to modify its vocal utterance, that of course is out of the question. The consonant therefore remains as a distinguishing characteristic of man.

This fact seems to have a very important bearing upon the much-vexed question of the origin of language, — a question which has provoked so much very unsatisfactory discussion, combined with such unpleasant exhibitions of temper, that the Société de Linguistique, lately established in Paris, has made it one of its statute laws that no paper upon the origin of language shall be received by that association. Where there is such conflict of opinions among great philologists, and where hope of a tenable theory has, by some of the most eminent, been openly abandoned, it would be more than presumption in me to put forth a theory and ask for its acceptance. But I have one (if so simple a thing can be called a theory) which entirely satisfies myself, and there can be no harm in my telling it to my readers. It is this: —

Man first uttered formless vowel sounds, as now in early infancy or in idiocy, that prolonged infancy of the mind, he utters only such sounds. These sounds were not language, hardly more than the cries of beasts are language; but still, being uttered by an intelligent creature, capable of "discourse of reason," they had *some* significance. The vowel sounds were in the course of time interrupted, modified, and supported by consonants, without which vowels cannot be put to much intelligent or significant use. Vocal utterance, thus made articulate, had of course differ

ences; and those differences came naturally and inevitably to be associated with things, with feelings, and with thoughts; indeed, were born of such association. Thus roots were formed. Those roots were combined and modified as circumstances required; and in this way original language, or perhaps languages, came into being. When this took place, who would venture even to conjecture? Who knows, or can even hope to know, the first state of man? As to Sanskrit, that most ancient and most highly elaborated form of human speech is far adown the ages; and even the language from which Sanskrit and the other Indo-European languages are derived represents, we may be sure, a progress through untold centuries from the time when the human consonant turned the merely animal vowel from vague noise into intelligible speech.

That is the simple belief as to the origin of language which I shall hold until some great philologist propounds a theory which all the other great philologists shall accept without dispute. I am inclined to the opinion that should I live to the age of Methuselah my *theoria laici* will not be disturbed.

The primitive *a* (*ah*) is acknowledged on all hands to the original vowel sound. It is the simplest of all vocal utterances, that which comes without conscious effort or premeditation from man and child. The first consonant was probably *m*, that which we find in most Indo-European languages combined with the first vowel in a word which expresses the earliest object of interest to the human creature, — *mamma*, the female breast, — and which has hence become the infant's word for mother almost the world over. Doubtless the combination was first in a single sylla-

ble *ma*; but reduplication is one of the earliest modes, perhaps the earliest mode, of expressing intensification of interest.

M is not, however, to be regarded as the first consonant because it begins the word that is the first that is now used by children; but as children use it first because it is the easiest and the simplest means of breaking up the continuity of a vowel sound, and giving it articulation, it is probable that it is the first that was heard. The mere opening and closing of the mouth during the utterance of the *ah* sound gives *ma* or *mamma*; for what we call the nasal sound of *m* has to be intentionally avoided. Children now sometimes reduplicate this indefinitely, and say *mamamamamama*, as they do *papapapapapa*. The limitation of either word to a single reduplication is arbitrary and conventional, a dictate of convenience. Some linguists regard *mamma* as the result of a childish attempt to say *mother*. Surely not. The name must have attached itself to the most visible sign and token of motherhood, and then to the mother, from its being the first childish effort at speech. Surely *mamma* long preceded the earliest form of *mother* or *mater*.

To *m* probably succeeded *b* and *p*, which are so closely related to *m* that they are mere modifications of it, as any one will see who tries a few experiments in the production of these three consonants, which are produced by the lips alone, and are therefore called labials; for *m* can be sounded, although not continuously, with the nostrils and even the whole nose held tightly closed. The first use of the tongue as an interruption and modifier of vowel utterance probably produced *d*, which was followed by *t*, which

is merely a stronger *d*, as a similar experiment will show. *L* and *r* probably soon followed; and as to the order or the succession of the other consonants, I shall not here venture an opinion, nor does our purpose require that I should do so.

Consonants are very fixed in their pronunciation, as to which in various words there is little dispute among the orthoëpists of any language; but those of kindred formation do have a tendency to run into each other, as *m* into *b*, *t* into *d*, and *r* into *l*. But while the tendency of vowels is to change, that of consonants is to stability. Almost all languages have almost all the consonants known to any one of them; a remark which, however, applies chiefly to what may be called the primitive consonants. But, for example, the Chinese is without *r*, for which, in pronouncing foreign words in which it occurs, the Chinaman is obliged to substitute *l*, and say, as we all know, *Melican* for *American*, and *lide* for *ride*; and many children are obliged to do the same. These facts favor the supposition that *r* is a consonant sound of later formation than *l*. On the contrary, however, the Japanese find the sound of *l* a difficult one to make, and substitute for it that of *r*. We may at least reasonably suppose that these two consonants are the last and most difficult attainments of human speech.

I now turn to Professor Whitney's remarks upon the consonantal sounds and combinations in the English language, as to which, however, little is to be said except in praise of his patient and minute observation of the manner in which the sounds are formed, and of the intelligible style in which he sets forth his conclusions. If speech is to be treated in such a way (and, like the cardinal, "I do not see the neces-

sity"), the results of such investigations could hardly be presented in a form more likely to interest an intelligent reader not bitten with the monomania of phonetics than that in which Professor Whitney has presented them. Much of this sort of work, I frankly own, seems to me laborious trifling. Take, for example, the following passage, which, it will be seen, refers to the phonetic opinions of others than Professor Whitney:—

"Some phonetists claim that to make a whole *p*, for example, both a closure and a breach [of the lips] are required, — thus, *apa*, — either *ap* or *pa* being only a half or incomplete utterance; others, again, claim that *ap* is complete and *pa* is complete, and so that *apa* is really double, and ought (I infer) to be written *appa*, a single mute between vowels being an impossibility; but I see no sufficient ground for either opinion.

"It is again asserted by some (notably by Lepsius) that our usual *p*, *t*, *k*, are not simple mutes, but rather aspirates, — that is to say, that a bit of breath, a brief *h*, is slipped out between the breach of mute contact and the beginning of a following vowel or other more open sound. This I should confidently rely on as far as our ordinary pronunciation is concerned."

And what matter if either opinion in either case is true or false? Of what moment is it, as regards language or pronunciation, whether the consonant sound in *apa* is single or double, or whether a "bit of breath" slips out after *p*, *t*, and *k*, or not? I rank such discussions with those as to whether certain words are prepositions, or adverbs, or conjunctions; whether they are one or another being, it seems to me, of the least possible consequence.

I may be pardoned, perhaps, for expressing my re

gret, by the way, that Professor Whitney should give the support of his example to such a use of *claim* as appears twice in one of the sentences just quoted: "Some phonetists *claim that* to make a whole *p*," etc.; "others, again, *claim that ap* is complete." An intelligent and highly cultivated Englishman said lately, in my hearing, that "the American people have *claim* on the brain." The gibe seemed to me to be fully justified.[1] Of late years this word has come to be used among us in a very queer way as a word of all work. If a man asserts anything, he "claims" it; if he disputes anything, he "claims" the contrary; if he suggests anything, he "claims" it; if he defends his reputation, he "claims that" he is an honest man; if he denounces a political opponent, he "claims that" "his record" is disgraceful, and perhaps "claims that" his grandfather was a Tory in the Revolution, or he "claims that" his grand-aunt was no better than she should be; if he is a scientific man, he "claims that" Darwin has established the theory of evolution; if a theologian, he "claims that" Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall are emissaries of Satan, — and so forth, and so forth; for there is no end to the variety of this use, or rather misuse, of the word. A man may claim, or demand, his own, — a thing, an interest, or a promise; but not *that* a thing, or a fact, or a person is thus or so. The contamination of evil speaking corrupts good English; and when it taints the vocabulary of a philologist like Professor Whitney, what may not be pardoned to the rest of us, poor laymen in language!

Professor Whitney calls these three "mutes," *p*, *t*,

[1] I could, however, produce examples even of "claim that" from British publications of high rank.

and *k*, "surds," a name which, he tells us, "is intended to describe them as produced without any tone, any sonorous vibration of the vocal cords." He insists strongly upon the use of "surd" and "sonant," and says that to call the consonants in question "'hard,' or 'sharp,' or 'strong,' or by any other such scientifically inaccurate and merely fanciful or blundering title, is altogether to be condemned." The terms "strong" or "hard" and "soft" or "weak," he says, "began in ignorance, and are continued in heedless imitation or in misapprehension." This is rather severe treatment of terms which are in favor with the most eminent phonologists, — even, as Professor Whitney admits, the greatest German philologists; but if the terms are really as meaningless and as misleading as he strenuously asserts that they are, his condemnation of them may be quite justifiable.

Not professing to treat the subject with what Professor Whitney calls scientific accuracy, but merely to present to my readers the results of such observations as I have made upon it, I venture to say that to me the terms "hard" or "strong," "soft" or "weak," seem to be so very truly descriptive that I do not wonder that the great German philologists and others cling to them. The question, indeed, is one of fact more than of terminology. It is simply whether the difference between *p* and *b*, and between *t* and *d*, is a difference between strength and weakness. It seems to me without doubt to be so; but not of strength and weakness in the sense of force and feebleness of utterance, as Professor Whitney seems to imply. For when a shipmaster shouts, "Port your helum!" or, "Haul down! Taut and belay!" his *p*'s

and *b*'s, *d*'s and *t*'s, are, indeed, easily distinguished, but no more easily than those of a school-girl who is whispering slyly to her neighbor. The point is this: *p* and *b* are formed by the same or by a like action of the lips; *t* and *d* by the same or by a like action of the tongue; the lips and the tongue producing in each a perfect closure of utterance. The difference between them is, to the ears of those whose usage Professor Whitney derides, a softening of the former — in character, not in force of sound — into the latter. This softening is unavoidably accompanied, perhaps is caused, by a slight laryngeal murmur; but none the less does it seem accurately descriptive to say that *p* and *t* are "softened" into *b* and *d*, or *vice versa*, that *p* and *t* are "hard" *b* and *d*. This Professor Whitney himself seems to admit when he subsequently says: "The *b* sound then is the sonant counterpart of the *p*, identical with it in the position of the mouth organs, differing only in the laryngeal action;" adding the like as to *d* and *t*.

In referring to *g* as "the intonated *k*" Professor Whitney makes the former letter the sign only of what is known as the hard sound of *g*; the soft *g* he regards as *j*. In this he is not singular. But considering that in the languages of Continental Europe *j* represents the English *y* sound, and that *g* in the same languages so largely represents the English *j* sound, it should seem that the correctness of this limitation of *g* to the sounds of intonated *k* may at least be doubtful. The sounds of *g* hard and *g* soft are not only so different, but are formed by such a very different action of the vocal organs, that the use of the same character to indicate them is not easily accounted for. The sound of *g* hard is produced by

pressing the lower-middle part of the tongue firmly against the roof of the mouth and then drawing it suddenly away with a guttural expulsion of breath. The soft *g*, or English *j*, sound is formed chiefly by the teeth assisted by the tip of the tongue. The tip of the tongue is pressed tightly against the extreme front of the palate, and then as it is withdrawn the breath is driven out between the gradually opening teeth. Neither the two actions nor the two consequent sounds pass into each other; nor are they in any way modifications the one of the other. I believe that there is no uncertainty as to the sound of *g*, or any mispronunciation of it which calls for remark, except in the word *suggest*, in which the first *g* is hard and the second soft, as in *succeed* the first *c* is hard and the second soft. But not a few educated people fall into the habit of pronouncing both *g*'s soft in the former, — *sujest* instead of *sujest*. In doing this there is great peril of falling at last into the slough of *s'jest*.

I venture also to question the accuracy of the assertion that "the *d* is nearly related to the *l* and *r*, all being alike tongue-point letters; a relaxation of the contact at the tip of the tongue converts the *d* into *r*; a like relaxation at the side or sides of the tongue converts it into an *l*. All, especially the *l* and *r*, interchange frequently in the history of language." This seems to be a somewhat too mechanical view of the subject. That the point of the tongue has something to do with the formation of the sounds of all these letters is true. But the essential vocal characters of *d* and *l* are as different as those of two vowels can be. The essential characteristic of *d* is perfect closure and explosion, followed by sudden relaxation and pas

ge of the pure vowel sound; that of *r* is non-closure, no relaxation, but a continued passage of the vowel sound accompanied by a trill. In *d* the tip of the tongue is pressed firmly against the roof of the mouth, just above the teeth; in *r* the jaw is dropped, and the tip of the tongue does not even approach the teeth, but plays freely in the full cavity of the mouth. This great mechanical difference is, however, of importance from my point of view only as it accompanies two sounds so absolutely unlike as those of *d* and *r*.

In connection with the "palatal mutes," Professor Whitney remarks the ease with which the *y* sound is inserted after them, and says, "One of the latest downward steps in English orthoëpy has been the intrusion of this *y* sound after *k* and *g* in a not very large class of words by a certain part of the community." He cites as examples *kind*, *guard*, and *girl*, pronounced *k-yind*, *g-yard*, and *g-yurl*. I do not know what limit is implied in Professor Whitney's term "latest;" but the pronunciation to which he refers is at least two centuries old, and is still in vogue among the best English speakers. According to my observation, no high-bred, well-educated Englishman pronounces *girl gurl*, any more than he pronounces *de dook*. Nor does he, on the other hand, say *ge-yurl*, *de-yook*. That is the vocal sign of pinchbeck passing itself for gold, and well deserves Professor Whitney's denunciation as "particularly affected and disagreeable." But there is in the best English pronunciation a delicate softening of the hard contact of *g* and *k* and *d* upon the succeeding vowel, a kind of vocal buffer of extremest tenuity, which, to my ear, is the very reverse of disagreeable. And so far is this

utterance from being a late downward step, that, on the contrary, it is a little evanescent grace of speech which is beginning to pass away.[1]

In his remarks upon *th* Professor Whitney says that the orthoëpic manuals are obliged to point out the right sound in each case and insist upon its observance, and that "they tell us we must give the sonant sound [soft, as in *the, them*] in *baths, oaths, moths, mouths, sheaths*, and many more, and must give the surd [hard, as in *thin, thick*] in *cloths, truths, youths*, and a few others." As to the prescriptions of orthoëpic manuals, I am comparatively uninformed; but should I find in one of them instruction to pronounce *truths* and *youths* with the *th* as in *thin*, it would go far with me to discredit the work as a trustworthy record of the best English pronunciation of this generation. I cannot remember to have heard, surely I never heard from a speaker from whom the best pronunciation was to be looked for, those words pronounced otherwise than with the soft *th*, as in *this*. The singular forms *truth* and *youth* have *th* as in *thin*. As to *cloths*, it is to be remarked that a distinction is made by pronunciation between cloths in bulk and cloths made up for wearing; the former having the hard sound and the latter the soft, and being (now) written *clothes*, although they are really but the same word.

It is much to be regretted that the old English letter ð for this sound was allowed to fall out of use.

[1] Walker (1791) says, "When this [the letter i] is preceded by hard *g* or *k*, which is but another form for hard *c*, it is pronounced as if an *e* were inserted between the consonant and the vowel. Thus *sky, kind, guide, guise, disguise, guile, beguile, mankind* are pronounced as if written *ske-y, ke-inde, gue-ide*, etc., etc." (*Principles of English Pronunciation*, § 160.) The same pronunciation is mentioned by Steele in his *Grammar of the English Tongue*, 1720, page 49.

Th sound is not at all a compound of those of *t* and *h*, by uniting which we indicate it. It is a perfectly simple sound, as much as that of *s* is; and it would be well if the philologists who are undertaking to simplify our spelling would advocate the restoration of our old English letter for this (among modern languages) peculiarly English sound. There would be no difficulty, or very little, about bringing it gradually into vogue and into favor.

In regard to the *z* sound (not the pronunciation of *z*), Professor Whitney remarks that "a considerable share of our *z*'s are comparatively recent corruptions of the *s* sound;" and he adds that the change is going on actively, and that consequently there are many words, and even whole classes of words, in regard to which usage is unsettled. His own pronunciation, he tells us, adheres to the older *s* sound; and he says *dis-able*, *dis-band*, *dis-dain*, *dis-gust*, *dis-honest*, *dis-miss*, *dis-oblige*, *dis-robe*, etc., with a real *s*; but not *dis-cern*, *dis-ease*, *dis-solve*. In this pronunciation it seems to me that Professor Whitney conforms precisely to the best English usage, and that his implied censure of the *dizzy* pronunciation is fully justified. I do not remember having heard the latter from speakers of good English, — except rarely in *disgust* and *dishonest* (*dizgust*, *dizonest*). This (the *s* sound) I find is the pronunciation given by the last, and what I have found to be the most trustworthy, English authority, — Phelp, in Stormonth's dictionary, — who, even in *disgust* and *dishonest*, gives the simple sound of *s*. But when Professor Whitney says, as to the combination of *e* with *x*, that he believes there is not a single word in which he pronounces *ex* as *egz*, "without an effort specially

directed to that end," I cannot hesitate a moment in saying that his pronunciation is, according to my observation, peculiar to him among men of his culture and position. By my teacher (like him a Yankee born and bred) I was taught to pronounce the unaccented *ex* (as in *example*, *exert*) as *egz;* and among those from whom I caught my speech at home (also Yankees born and bred) I heard the same sound. Phelp gives this pronunciation as that of to-day; and as to the "novelty" of it, Walker, writing in 1791, says, "*X* has its flat sound like *gz* when the accent is not on it and the following syllable begins with a vowel;" and my grandfather, who graduated at Yale in 1786, pronounced the *ex* thus; and as he must have caught the sound from his father or in his father's house, this is pretty good evidence that it antedated Walker a full half-century.

I see no occasion for further remark upon Professor Whitney's records of English pronunciation; and in what I have made them the occasion of saying, I trust that there has been not a word which expressed on my part other than the fullest recognition of the value of his labors, — valuable even in this minor field of linguistic study, — or which failed in the expression of personal respect. In real philology I should no more think of measuring swords with him than a West Point cadet should think of doing the like with Sherman or Von Moltke in war; but the subject of pronunciation is one upon which a student of his mother tongue, who has found that he may trust his ear and his memory, may without any such pretense offer the results of his observation.

CHAPTER IV.

ORTHOEPY AND ORTHOGRAPHY. — SPELLING-BOOK SPEECH.

In a dictionary intended to meet the popular demand for a hand-book which shall be a guide to the correct use of words, pronunciation is regarded as an element of prime importance. And yet much might be said against the introduction of this department into lexicography, which took place about a hundred years ago.

One of the objections that lie against pronouncing dictionaries is manifest upon a comparison of Perry's Standard English Dictionary, published at London in 1777, and Walker's Critical Pronouncing Dictionary, published also at London in 1791, both of which profess to give the usage of the best English society at that time. For although they were published within so few years of each other that the pronunciation which they profess to record must have been the same, they differ in many instances. Moreover, there is the almost insuperable difficulty of expressing with any great degree of certainty the sounds and inflections of words as they are uttered in daily conversation; for those sounds and inflections are in many instances so delicate in their character that they cannot even be described, much less expressed exactly and unmistakably by letters, or by other arbitrary signs. We are sent from word to word, and from word to

sign, and from sign to word, on the assumption that certain signs, or at least certain familiar words, w... surely indicate to us certain sounds. The probability is that they will do so in most cases; but it is also probable that in many cases they will not. The result is a mere circle of uncertainty; except, indeed, in regard to accent, as to which, of course, usage may be recorded or change advocated with understanding and precision.

Striking examples in illustration of the difficulty of expressing and of fixing pronunciation are furnished in a very interesting and instructive article, by Prof. F. W. Newman, upon English as spoken and written, which appeared in the "Contemporary Review," March, 1878. The main purpose of the writer is the consideration of the question of a change in English orthography. But in the course of his article he makes revelations and advances opinions in regard to pronunciation itself which are of much interest, both intrinsically and by way of suggestion.

Professor Newman's early education and the associations of his long life, quite as much as his acquirements and the nature of his studies, make his remarks upon English pronunciation of greater value than those of almost any other English man of letters would be; and they are none the less so, but rather the more, because, although an observant student of language, he is not a professed philologist or phonologist, and is not likely to be committed to any school or crotchet, or to be subject to that perversion of the judgment with which the specialist is so commonly and not unnaturally afflicted. What he gives us is the knowledge and the opinion of a highly educated man, who acquired his pronunciation in London and

at Oxford, and who has all his life been accustomed to the society of the best bred and most highly cultivated English society.[1] Yet it will appear, I think, that even such a man may err as to the best usage in English speech, and that the reasons of his error bear very significantly upon both orthoëpy and phonetic spelling.

In showing the difficulties in the way of making a change in written English, Professor Newman first calls attention to the very obtrusive fact of the uncertainty of English pronunciation. "Small indeed," he says, "is the shifting in orthography compared to the innovations in utterance, especially in a country which has many provincial dialects, and no public schools in which uniformity of pronunciation is cultivated. It is owing to the change in pronunciation while orthography has been almost fixed that there is greater difference between written and spoken English than there was three centuries ago.[2] It is for this reason, and because of the assimilating and trait-destroying tendencies of slovenly speech, that, for example, the same sound has come to be the expression of four such different thoughts and things

[1] Professor Newman's brother is the Rev. J. H. Newman, now cardinal, who is regarded by some persons as the best living writer of English; an appreciation of him which, although it may not be without some reason, implies a degree of positive merit in his style which I have not been able to discover.

[2] I doubt, I more than doubt, that this greater difference can rightly be said to exist. For in the first place, to say that the difference between sound and sign is greater now than it was then implicitly asserts a fixed, unchangeable value in the sign. This begs the question. Next, granting that we can determine the value of the sign — the letters, — I am inclined to believe that variation between sound and sign was quite as great then as it is now, if not greater than it is now, one reason of which is that pronunciation was then less nearly uniform. But the question is an intricate one, and it being not essential to our purpose, I pass it by.

as *rite*, *right*, *write*, and *wright;* so also as to *soul* and *sole*. The reader may easily call to mind others. Now, one question is, Shall we, for the convenience of children and foreigners, increase and multiply and aggravate this undesirable uniformity of name for widely distinct ideas, by destroying the written record of their difference?"

If a change in spelling is to be made, one point must be previously settled, — the pronunciation which the new spelling is to represent. What *is* the right pronunciation of any given word, and how shall it be expressed? This position taken by Professor Newman [1] the blindest and most headlong advocates of phonographic spelling cannot have the hardihood to deny. It is from his consideration of our subject in this aspect that Professor Newman's paper has its peculiar value and interest.

What, then, he asks in the beginning, are we to do with *grant*, *command*, *grass*, *task*, and other like words, the correct pronunciation of which he holds to be with the *a* broad, while a pronunciation of them with the *a* short, as in *an*, "appears to be in London current and fashionable"? I will remark in passing that at Oxford and at Cambridge I heard with pleasure the long and broad pronunciation of these words by the young men as well as by the old. It was not merely the broad, but not very long, *a* which I had been accustomed to, but a full *ah*, — *commahnd*, *grahss*, *pahst*, etc. Yet for the conjunction no one said *ahnd*, which was doubtless the old pronunciation, but *and*, with the *a* as in *an*. Similar irregularities are not uncommon in English.

[1] And not new, I may be permitted to say, to my readers of the past eight or ten years.

fessor Newman next brings up the suppression
t the end of a syllable or before a consonant.
s," he says, "*lord*, *hard*, *door*, *lorn*, *pore*, *pork*,
anded *laud*, *haad*, *daw*, *lawn*, *paw*, *pawk*, if I
ghtly informed; *arms* and *alms* are alike cor-
d into *aams*." As to this pronunciation, it is to
membered that in the formation of speech the
r was probably the last to be developed; that
of all English sounds at least, the most difficult
erance, that which requires the most flexibility
e vocal organs and the most correct habit of
h, and therefore it is the letter most likely to
opped by the ignorant, the slovenly, and the
id. He also notices the dropping of *h* in words
hich and *white* and *wheel* and *whistle*, which is
mmon in England that a record of it as the cor-
pronunciation has crept into one or two diction-
. This confounding of *which* with *witch* and
with *weal* Professor Newman condemns, and
ly; but it is very common in England, even
g the best bred and best educated people. A
who will say comm*ah*nd and l*o*rd will yet say
for *which*. This corrupt sounding of *wh* as mere
rofessor Newman says, "damages at least seven-
root words, and surely ought to be rebuked as
ply as the perversion of *horse*, *hand*, *hedge*, *hill*,
orse, *and*, *edge*, *ill*." This protest may not be
logical; for the business, or the chief business,
e philologist is merely to record and to trace
e; but it is the voice of common sense and good
e. A slovenly utterance which damages root
ds is not to be accepted without resistance, or at
without protest. The suppression of *h* in *wh* is,
ys, "an especial disgrace of Southern England,"

The constant question, then, here recurs. If we are to print our books with phonetic spelling, are we to spell *which* or *witch*, and which is witch, and is witch which? Professor Newman tells us that his schoolmaster "sounded the *w* in *whole*." Should any reader think such a pronunciation strange or difficult, let him say why it is more strange or difficult to pronounce the *w* in *whole* than to do so in *whirl* and in *whistle*, which is done by all educated "Americans" and by the best speakers in England. If it is sounded in these words, why should it be silent in that? To distinguish *whole* from *hole*, otherwise than by the delicate difference which good speakers make between the length (not in the sound) of the vowel in the two words, is certainly an advantage. His teacher's pronunciation of *whole* suggests to Professor Newman two small corrections which he regards as needed in orthography: "First, we ought to write *wholely* (just as *solely*, *vilely*) so as to secure the sounding of the double *l*; next, in the unseemly word *whore*, we ought to omit the *w*, which is a stupid, causeless addition. Wickliffe writes *hore*. *Wholly* ought not to rhyme with *holy*." As to the last point, it is to be remarked that the rhyme, although permissible in verse, is not absolutely perfect, any more than that of *whole* with *hole*. The *o* in *wholly* is shorter and a little less open than that in *holy*.

In the names of places and of men, according to Professor Newman, "the sound ought to be in close harmony with the writing. If we write Berwick, Dulwich, Keswick, Greenwich, and Norwich, we ought to sound the *w*, and *vice versa*." Therefore, since no one, as he reasonably assumes, would favor the vitiating of historical records by omitting the *w*,

he decides that the *w* should be sounded. But would he really have us call Norwich *Nor-witch?* If so, what is to become of that time-honored epic, —

"The man in the moon
Came down too soon,
And ask'd his way to Norwich;
He went by the south,
And burnt his mouth
With eating cold pease-porridge."

Plainly the pronunciation *Norich* is of a very respectable antiquity. And Professor Newman may be sure that an act of Parliament and an act of Congress together could not bring back the pronunciation *Norwitch*. Such contractions are inevitable, and are not objectionable. Through them comes to speech a freedom and ease which cannot be given up for the sake of a literal conformity of sound to sign. Professor Newman himself yields the *w* "in rapid and familiar speech," but insists on it, and on a like particularity of pronunciation, in all serious or formal reading or speaking. "So," he suggests, "we tolerate *tuppence* for *two pence*, but not in the parable of the Good Samaritan."

But what Parliament and Congress could not effect may be brought about, I fear, by the unnatural and monstrous way of learning to speak by the spelling-book; for not only is Delhi in New York called by some persons *Dell-high*, but Warwick is called *War-wick*, and Tivoli *Tiv-oh-lie;* but the best speakers say *Daily*, *Warick* (with the accent on the first syllable), *Tiv-o-le*.

One remark made by him in connection with this subject seems strangely amiss. He says that "in the town of Derby its name is sounded as it is spelt, while the aristocracy call it *Darby*." As to the lat-

ter point, there is no doubt; but he quotes with approval the remark of an old lady, made to him in his boyhood: "They have learned *from their grooms* to say *Darby* and *Barkshire*." But the old lady was wrong; and that she was so, Professor Newman himself would have seen upon a little reflection. For it is not possible that he should be ignorant that the syllable written *er* was, until a comparatively recent day, sounded *ar*, and even is now so sounded in other words than proper names.

In the days of our grandfathers *clerk* was universally pronounced to rhyme with *ark*, and was also very often written *clark;* and *clergy* was pronounced *clargy*. Indeed, the sound of *e* before *r* was until a comparatively recent date in most words that of broad *a* (*ah*). The most cultivated people two generations ago said *sartain* and *sarvant*. *Sergeant* is even now pronounced by the best speakers in England, and generally in "America," *sarjeant; marchant* for *merchant* has but just become obsolete, and is preserved in the surname Marchant. The old *parlous* was a mere contraction of *perilous*, and in our word *parson* we have only a phonographic petrifaction of the old way of pronouncing *person;* for the *parson* of a parish was merely the *person* of it *par excellence*, and in the "Canterbury Tales" we have the "Person's [that is, the Parson's] Tale." In the following lines, from the ballad of the "Wonders of England," printed about 1559, we find what was then a mere phonographic spelling of *martial*, as well as evidence that the combination t i a was pronounced then as now: —

"Fearing again God's light should spring,
Brought *mershial* law forthwith in hand

Against all such as would withstand
Their wicked raygne and cruell band,
And God's part take."
(Ancient Ballades and Broadsides, page 96.)

And Ben Jonson, in "The Case is Altered," spells the noble Italian name Farnese always *Fernese*. The pronunciation *clark* has held its ground, and is still that of the best speakers in England, where indeed it may be regarded as almost universal. Having, in my boyhood, been familiarly acquainted with the old town of Derby, in Connecticut, I can bear witness to the pronunciation of its name as *Darby* by those who were not grooms and did not learn their speech in stables. Professor Newman was momentarily forgetful. There is no fact in phonology better established than this old pronunciation of *er;* and the aristocratic pronunciation of Derby and Berkshire is merely conservative, while that of the people of inferior rank is an innovating conformity of sound to sign,—spelling-book speech. This tendency is much more general in "America" than in England. In the latter country, to call the Earl of Derby anything but the Earl of *Darby* is to be at least eccentric. I remember hearing an English gentleman of the earl's own social circle reply to a remark that the name was pronounced by some Englishmen *Durby*, "Possibly; but I am sure by none of the earl's acquaintances." This solicitude as to the pronunciation of words according to their spelling is one of the most unmistakable signs of a lack of that education which is only to be acquired at home,—an education which makes pronunciation, if not reading and writing, "come by nature." The pronunciation now to be learned from teachers in public schools is too often

bad, and generally stiff and pedantic,—book talk, not free, manly speech.

Nevertheless, this pronunciation of *e*, *ea*, and *i* before *r* as obscure *u* has been steadily although slowly advancing for many years. *Earth*, now pronounced *urth*, was formerly pronounced *arth*, and it is not long since the pronunciation entirely disappeared, even among cultivated speakers of extreme conservatism and high fashion. This seems strange to us of the present generation; but we have the same sound of e a r in *hearth* and *heart*. *Hearth* is but the earth on which the fire was built, as the main beam of the house is the roof-*tree*. In both these homely names for homely things the primitive word has remained to us. The pronunciation of *hearth* as *hurth* is slowly creeping in, and will probably prevail; but it will be a long while before we plainly and openly call our *hearts* our *hurts*. There is a tendency to give not only *e* but *i* and even *o* before *r* the sound of broad *a*. We have all heard old people, not uneducated, say *cartue*, although that pronunciation of *virtue* now marks the extreme of rusticity. I have heard Englishmen, although not those of the best culture, pronounce *corn carn*. The giving of the obscure sound of *u* to *i* before *r*, as in *virtue*, is a comparatively late fashion. In the middle of the last century, and even later, to pronounce *virtue vurtue* was perhaps even more inelegant than to pronounce it *vartue*. I give here a transcript of a manuscript note which I found laid in a book I once owned, which was published in the latter part of the last century. The handwriting is elegant and of the period; the paper such old laid-linen fabric as has not been made for a hundred years

EPIGRAM BY THE CELEBRATED DAVID GARRICK.

In 1759 Dr. Hill wrote a Pamphlet intituled "To David Garrick, Esqre — the Petition of I in behalf of herself and Sister." The purport of it was to charge Mr. Garrick with mispronouncing some words including the letter I, as *furm* for *firm*, *vurtue* for *virtue*, and others.

The Pamphlet is now sunk in oblivion; but the following Epigram, which Mr. Garrick wrote on the occasion, deserves to be preserved as one of the best in the English language: —

TO DR. HILL, UPON HIS PETITION OF THE LETTER I TO DAVID GARRICK, ESQRE.

If 't is true, as you say, that I 've injured a letter,
I 'll change my note soon, and I hope for the better;
May the just right of letters, as well as of men,
Hereafter be fixed by the tongue and the pen.
Most devoutly I wish that they both have their due,
That I may be never mistaken for U.

The pronunciation for which Dr. Hill contended with Garrick was one which I remember having heard from some old people in my boyhood, — a sound of the *i* in *virtue*, *firm*, *birth*, etc., like that which we now give to *e* in *ferry*, *berry*, *err*, etc.; these people thought it very "ungenteel" to say *vurtue*, *furm*, *burth*, and as bad to pronounce *inter* *intur*, or *err ur*. They pronounced all those words with the vowel sound of *e* in *error*. But nowadays we hear some slovenly speakers pronounce even the first syllable of the last word as *ur*, making the whole word a guttural *ur-r-r*. The course of the pronunciation of the *i* in *virtue* and the like seems to have been this: first *veertue* (with the Continental sound of *i*), next *verrtue*, then *vurtue;* that of *e* in *clerk* and the like, first *clayrk* (with the Continental sound of *a*), then *clark*, and finally, as in *clergyman*, *clurk*.

The sound of *a* and *e* before *r* thus shows a tendency to run confusedly into the obscure sound of *u* in *fur*, which is certainly not to be admired, but which can be with difficulty restrained.[1]

In words other than proper names, Professor Newman suggests "a few cautious innovations," which are themselves suggestive. In words in which a double spelling is current he advocates what will hardly be disputed by any one, the use of that spelling which agrees best with the sound. He would write *jail*, not *gaol*, *show*, not *shew*, *hiccup*, not *hiccough*, *chesnut*, not *chestnut*, *guage*, not *gauge*, and so forth, through some eighteen words which need not be particularly mentioned. Among them, however, are to be noticed *alchemy* and *chemist*, which he would spell *alchymy* and *chymist*. This was the old spelling; and according to him it agrees with the sound of the words. But according to the best orthoëpists of the day, the pronunciation is *chem* in both words; and I have never heard it otherwise sounded among the best speakers in England or "America." Whom are we to trust on such points, and what phonetic spelling shall we adopt? I have no hesitation in saying that the better spelling and pronunciation is *chymist*. The question, however, is not what is the best or the normally right, but what *is*. In this word orthography has followed orthoëpy, and has produced the change in writing which the philologists prefer as a guide to the changes in sound, to trace which is their function.

In illustration of his views of pronunciation and

[1] Walker (*Principles*, etc., § 110) says that the sound of *i* as *u* in the first syllables of *virgin* and *virtue* "has a grossness in it approaching vulgarity."

spelling, and of their relations, Professor Newman treats eleven numbered examples, which are here considered in their order: —

(1.) *Schedule* being the only word in which *sch* has the German sound, he proposes that it should be written *shedule*, and that *schism* should be written *scism*. But consistency would require that we should write *sism* and *sissors*, if we make any change at all in this direction; and as to *schedule*, it would seem better to pronounce it according to analogy with the *ch* hard, as in *scheme*. This best agrees with the derivation of the word, and conforms to the sound of *sch* in most of those words in which *ch* is not silent. For like reasons *schism* might better be pronounced *skism* than written *scism* and pronounced *sism*, as *sceptre* might better be pronounced *skeptre* (like *skeptic*), and not written and pronounced *septer*.

(2.) *Clerk*, *sergeant*, *heart*, and *hearth* have *er* or *ear* for *ar*. It is proposed to extinguish these exceptions, and to write *clark*, *sargeant*, *hart*, and *harth*. This proposal is made, as we have seen, in forgetfulness that the *ar* sound in these words is the old sound, and that *clurk*, for example, although it is coming in, is not yet the pronunciation of the best English speakers. Is it not the better and the natural way to let the change go gradually on, until these words conform to *servant*, *person*, and the like, rather than to make a radical change in their written forms?

(3.) "*Yacht* alone in the language has *ch* mute. Who will regret the loss of the *ch*?" No one, probably, would mourn over it; but if we insist on representing the present pronunciation of the word in writing, why should we not write *yot*, and have done

with it? Once upon this road of literal conformity of sign to sound, we cannot stop short of the end, although it be absurdity and confusion.

(4.) As *conceive* and *deceive* make *conceit* and *deceit*, "we see that *receive* ought to make *receit*; the *p* in *receipt* is surely a vexation." There seems to be no objection to this. It is a good example of a desirable change in orthography, and is of a kind which will be brought about, we may be sure, in the progress of time.

(5.) "*Guild*," Professor Newman says, "used to rhyme with *mild*, *child*, and *wild*." It will surprise most readers that he says, "I never heard, in my early days, *guild*, *Guildhall*, sounded with short *i*." So quickly do changes in pronunciation take place, and so strange to the son are the vowels of his father! But here the change has been a conformity to analogy, and should stand; the mere fact that *guilt* is gratuitously confounded with *gild* being of no importance.

(6.) In "*Parliament*, *ia* has no proper place," we are told, and that "*parlement* is the old and only right spelling." As to this there seems to be no doubt. Here we have another example of a sound and sensible change proposed in orthography, one which should be adopted, and probably will be adopted erelong. But it is to be observed that this change is directly in the line of etymological conformity, and also that it disturbs no established association as to sound or as to sense. To changes of this kind no objection will be made by those who allow reason any sway in this matter.

(7.) In *busy* and *business* the sound of *u* as *i*, Professor Newman says, "is a peculiar anomaly

without historical justification," and he adds that we "ought, without hesitation, to write *bisy, bisiness*, if not rather *bizy, bizineas*." Etymology is in favor of *busy*, for the Anglo-Saxon is *bisig;* but that was pronounced *bresceg;* and *bisy* seems to be really a phonetic conformity to a change in the sound of the word. For that in *busy* *u* has the sound of *i*, a phonologist would be apt to dispute. True, it has the sound of *i* in *his* and in *wisdom;* but a phonologist would say that that sound is not the sound of *i*, or of *a, e, o*, or *u*, but is one of those obscure vowel sounds that have no representative in our alphabet. *Bisy* and *bizineas*, or more correctly *bizness*, may come into vogue; and, indeed, on the stage "business" (meaning illustrative action on the part of the performers) is called *biz*, which appears even upon prompt-books; but it may be questioned whether this will greatly tend to further the acceptance of the new orthography. And must we write hereafter

"How doth the little *bizy be*"?

(8.) Professor Newman next considers one of the silent-letter combinations, which the phonetic reformers set up as such tremendous stumbling-blocks. He says, "Perhaps ten words end in *mb* with *b* mute." Here he is not quite right; there are more than twenty words (not counting the compounds) ending in *mb*, and in all of them the *b* is mute. In all, however, excepting one, he would have the *b* suppressed, and would write for *tomb*, *womb*, and *lamb*, *toom*, *woom*, and *lam*. But in *climb* he would retain the *b*, because it has "both etymological reason and potential life, as *clamber* shows;" wherefore "to write *clime* for *climb* would be mere depravation." It seems to

me that any student of language who is not bitten with the phonetic mania would accept the last conclusion. Professor Newman would also have the *b* sounded and the *i* short, which, with reason, he says is, "I doubt not, the old and only true pronunciation." With equal reason he says that there would be no more difficulty in pronouncing *climb* thus than in sounding the *p* in *limp*, *imp*, and *jump*. But in *tomb* the *b* has etymological reason, the French being *tombeau*, the Italian *tomba;* and so with *womb* and *lamb*, in which the *b* is from the Anglo-Saxon, as we call the earliest form of our language. And in two of these words the *b* has also a certain potential life, for it prevents *tomb* from becoming in sound *tom*, and *womb* from undergoing a like change to *wom*. (We do, indeed, have in Old English, *wame*.)

Now the introduction of *oo* into these words for the preservation of their present pronunciation is one of the strangest and most incongruous devices that could be proposed in a scheme for simplifying and normalizing orthography. For among all the anomalies in our written language, there is none greater than that in virtue of which one *o* has the sound of *oh*, but *o* doubled the sound of *u* in *rude*. Regarded in the light of analogy and consistency, it is simply monstrous. The necessity for its introduction well illustrates the entanglement of this whole subject. Better a silent *b* which has etymological reason than *oo* which has no reason, and which is a phonetic monstrosity. As to the *b* in *limb*, *numb*, and *thumb*, having no etymological support for its presence, it may well be dropped whenever the whim takes us, as it probably will, to have no more of it.

There are in English two words beginning with which the *u* is superfluous. These are *build* and for, as Professor Newman well says, in *buoy* l speakers rightly sound the *u*, and do not con- the word with *boy*. *Build* he would write *bild*, is the spelling of the word in the German lan- ge, from which he believes (disregarding the An- Saxon *byldan*, to establish) we adopted *build;* t must have been more than eight centuries ago. *buy* also, according to Professor Newman, the *u* has rightful place; the Anglo-Saxon being *bycgan* and Old English *bigge*. But the Gothic *bugjan* has me weight on the side of *u*, particularly as *i* does not ctly represent *y*. Nevertheless, the *u* does not m important for any reason. As to change, Pro- or Newman says, "Unless we are to extirpate *gh* *nigh*, *high*, and many other words, it is obvious to rect *buy*, *buyer*, into *bigh*, *bigher*," which seems a olent change until we reflect that in the past tense *buy*, *bought*, we have the *gh*. This combination presents a guttural sound which without a doubt ed to be heard in all these words, and which they ill have in mouths of North of England and Low- nd Scots folk.

(10.) "The eccentric word *women* ought certainly be written *wimen*." Professor Newman gives no son for this very curt and absolute decision. The son which might be assigned for the change is ofold: first pronunciation and next derivation, the Anglo-Saxon word having been *wif-man*, the Old Eng- h *wimmon*. But *wimen* cannot be accepted as the ral of *woman;* and are we prepared to accept *wiman* the singular? — to sing our songs and to give our arts to *wiman?* Rather than this, shall we not ac-

cept *wimen* as an irregular, corrupt pronunciation of *women*, one of those deviations from strict rectitude which are graceful and pardonable?

(11.) "*Nephew* should be *nevew*; French *neveu*." But already there are indications that erelong *nevew* will yield to *nefew*, as the pronunciation of this word by the best speakers; and then the chief reason for the proposed change will have disappeared, and the fate of the word in its new written form will illustrate the difficulty of any deliberate and aggressive reformation in language, and will also prefigure the fate of other words which might undergo like transmutation.

These characteristic examples of changes in orthography proposed by a man singularly capable of such an undertaking, and one who has considered it carefully, and moreover one who shows no conservative shuddering at change, have a various value. It will be seen that they all tend toward etymological conformity, rather than away from it, and that they seem to do so in conformity to a law, or at least an impulse, rather than because of a phonetic purpose on the part of their suggester. They show on the part of such a man as Professor Newman an instinctive preference for an open, free, and manly utterance of words. And as to spelling, — for the two subjects of spelling and pronunciation are inseparable, — they enable us to see, as it were in a little mirror, the extreme difficulty (may it not be said the impossibility?) of making in the received spelling of English such a general reform toward phonetic exactness as would be at once effectual and acceptable. By changes, even of the kind proposed by Professor Newman himself, that which he elsewhere

calls the "nobler instrument" or medium of thought — written language — would be degraded, if not quite destroyed, as to its higher value. Briefly, we are led to the conclusion that there is no choice between a sweeping away of our present alphabet, and with it of the noblest literature the world has known, — a project rejected now even by the most eminent phonologists, — and the allowing our present orthography to remain, subject only to such gradually changing influences as have been silently at work upon it for centuries.

CHAPTER V.

UNACCENTED VOWELS AND FINAL CONSONANTS. — THE IRISH PRONUNCIATION.

THE inquirers as to the true pronunciation of English are a great multitude. If they were told that the right pronunciation for each one of them is just that in the midst of which he was born and bred, many of them would receive the information with doubt and wonder; of which, indeed, there would be some justification. And yet there would be also some reason in the declaration; for it would not be difficult to maintain that for the members of any community the right pronunciation of their mother tongue is that which prevails among their kinsfolk, their friends, and their neighbors. Of this all men may be sure: that if they do adopt any other pronunciation they will make themselves the subjects of invidious remark, and perhaps fail to attain the only end and purpose of speech, — the being understood by those to whom it is addressed. What people really mean (although they may not know it) by the right pronunciation of English is the pronunciation in vogue in the most cultivated society in England, and chiefly of London, and perhaps we may say of the two great universities, Oxford and Cambridge. For persons of rank and education, who were born and bred remote from the British metropolis, and who have passed most of their lives in their own counties (particularly

if those are far northward or westward from London), are rarely without peculiarities of utterance, both in general tone and in the sounds of particular words, which mark their speech as "provincial."

Now, this pronunciation of cultivated London is not uniform. It is marked with variations due to several causes, one of which is affectation. There are namby pamby, dawdling speakers, who mince and clip their words, and utter them without distinct articulation; and these speakers, notwithstanding that they are reprehended by those who would preserve a simple, strong, and manly speech, and ridiculed ("Punch" makes fun of them), exert an influence. Indeed, it is impossible for even one man to persist in a peculiarity of speech, if it is not too strangely at variance with the common pronunciation, without exercising a modifying influence upon the speech of those around him.

The right pronunciation of English means the right pronunciation *now;* and the best pronunciation has almost a conventional meaning, that is, the pronunciation of the best society. But, as we have seen, the pronunciation of this society may be really bad; affectation and fashion may change it for the worse. Yet if the deterioration prevails, it must be accepted. There is no help for this in language: We may see plainly that a coming or even an accomplished change is for the worse, and we may rightfully protest against it; but the change once effected, we must adopt it, within certain limits, at least, or else we become singular; and to be singular in speech is to be to a certain degree unintelligible.

As to the more strongly marked sound of words, the consonants, the accented vowels, and the long

unaccented vowels, there can be little difficulty for any person whose education is sufficient to make uncertainty embarrassing. On those points the usage which they may observe in every-day life, supplemented by the *dictu* of a good dictionary, will be sufficient. It is in the minuter points that difficulty lies. It is in the delicate but firm utterance of the unaccented vowels with correct sound that the cultured person is most surely distinguished from the uncultured. No one has any difficulty in giving the accented *e* and the accented *o* their proper sounds in *hysterical* and *historical*; but how large is the number of those who make the same distinction between the unaccented *e* and the unaccented *o* in *mystery* and *history*, in *literal* and *littoral*? And yet in that and in like distinction lie the beauty and the elegance of cultivated speech. The slovenly speaker "lumps" almost all such vowels into the obscure sound of *u*, saying *mystur-y*, *histur-y*, *litur-al*, and *littur-al*, even if he does not go further and say *mystry*, *histry*, *litrall*, and *litturl*. The same abominable slovenliness gives us *Mazzuruh* for Missouri, and *Ful'delfy* for Philadelphia. So in such words as *contrite*, *finite*, and *female* the unaccented vowels of the last syllable being long, it must be an ingeniously bad speaker who misutters them. But in such words as *mutable*, *emphasis*, *purpose*, *favorable*, *pliant*, and *lion*, the unaccented vowels are again all made short *u* by slovens in speech, who pronounce them as *mutubble*, *emphusis*, *purpus* (or *puppus*), *favorable* (or *favrable*), *pliunt*, *liun*. In like manner, the unaccented *a* of the last syllable of such words as *damage*, *ravage*, *savage*, *orange*, is changed into the short, obscure sound of *i*; and we hear them pronounced *damig*, *ravig*, *savig*, *oring*.

It is to be regretted that in the discussion of this part of his subject Professor Newman says merely that "*e* and *i* ending an unaccented syllable cannot be discriminated," and that in *permeate*, *vegetate*, *persevere*, the sound of the unaccented *e* cannot be distinguished from that of the unaccented *i* in *germinate*, *parsimony*, and *purity*, and that he speaks of this obscurity as "the *natural* result of the stress placed strongly on one syllable." Against this assertion I protest. By those who speak English well a difference is made between the *e* of such words as the first three and the *i* of such as the last; a difference which is effected by them, and the absence of which in the speech of others is detected by them, with ease and with certainty. They say *per-me-ate*, making the *e* as plain as if they said *per-mee-ate*, although they touch it so lightly; and when they say *par-sim-ony*, it is quite impossible for an ear at all nice to mistake the sound for *par-se-mony*.

In so far as a correct and elegant utterance of English is to be acquired by effort, it comes by attention to these details. A person who utters the vowel sounds in the unaccented syllables of words correctly, and whose *r*'s, *l*'s, and final *d*'s and *t*'s are heard, distinct but light upon his tongue, will have no difficulty about the simpler matters, the sound of the accented vowels. In fact, bad utterance may be said to be always the result of slovenliness in speech. Mere provincialism in pronunciation, which is generally in the sound given to accented vowels, is venial in comparison with slovenly speech, the effect of which is like that of smearing and daubing the outlines of a painting finished but not yet dry. Yet this habit prevails and always has prevailed, with the result of a constant degradation of speech, a phonetic decay in words.

A perception of this fact in phonetics leads students of language, not unnaturally, although perhaps vainly, to seek for what may be called the best pronunciation abstractly, irrespective of fashion, — the mere usage of the day. The temptation to this inquiry is the greater when, as now, there is an unprecedentedly strong effort to make our written language conform precisely to our speech. Professor Newman is very decided upon this point. He says, "It is at least absolutely necessary to define what is the right pronunciation (whether or not we can persuade this generation to adopt it) before we can wisely begin so vast a change as total remodeling of our orthography." To this he adds as a corollary that "if in this generation we protest in favor of a right pronunciation, and schools do their duty, the next generation will grow up with a new ideal. The defective utterance will be gradually thought vulgar."

This opinion is noticeable, first, for the position taken in it that there is some other rule of right in language than mere usage — a position not new to the readers of "Words and their Uses." But, passing this by without further comment, we ask, What is the pronunciation which Professor Newman sets forth as the best? He says, "Of two rival pronunciations, that is the better which better discriminates words and aids to fix the sense." This so plainly conforms to reason and to the purpose of language that it will hardly be controverted by any competent writer upon the subject.

Passing from this general and somewhat abstract consideration of the subject we may ask, What is the best actual style of pronouncing English? Is there a way of pronouncing English which in itself is best,

independent of the fashion of any day? I believe that there is such a pronunciation, and some years ago published my belief. It is with pleasure that I find myself supported by the opinion of Professor Newman, who declares himself in favor of the Irish pronunciation.

It need hardly be said that he does not desire to introduce the Irish brogue, or brogues; for there are several brogues, distinctive of various provinces. He means the speech of educated Irish gentlemen and ladies. Thus, for example, in carrying out the rule of distinction of sense by pronunciation, he would distinguish *soul* from *sole* by giving to *soul* the Irish pronunciation, *sowl*. As to *r*, he says, "Every Irish gentleman seems to me accurately to pronounce it; and I do not doubt that he has the true, primitive pronunciation, which we, from carelessness, have lost." He speaks with approval of Irish ladies, who, "without the smallest affectation or effort, pronounce *calm*, *palm*, *alms*, just as they are written, retaining the *l*, and making the *a* short and sharp, as in *man*." About *half* and *calf* he is not so sure, but he favors the same pronunciation, and believes that such was the English pronunciation once, and such ought to be now. He would extend it to all words in *al*, — *walk*, *stalk*, *chalk*, and *balk*. The many monosyllables in *oo*, such as *book*, *brook*, *cook*, *crook*, *look*, *foot*, *wood*, etc., he would pronounce with the long vowel sound in *cool*, *rule*. In short (to pass by other restorations, such as that of the initial consonants in words like *knife*, *gnat*, and *psalm*, which may here only be alluded to), the changes which he regards as necessary are all toward what we now call the Irish pronunciation.

For myself I have no hesitation in declaring in favor of the Irish pronunciation of the words in which *a* is sounded *ah*, and in which the compounds *ea* and *ei* have the sound of *ay : sayt*, not *seet*, for the word *seat*, and *consayt*, not *conseet*, for the word *conceit; ayther*, *naythe*r, not *eether*, *neether*, or much worse *ither*, *nither*. And who will doubt a moment that richness and clearness and elegance are given to language by the Irish *r*, the light roll of which gives us *born* instead of *bawn*, *car* instead of *cah*, *arms* for *ahms*, *order* for *awduh*, and *lord* for *lawd;* and which puts a backbone into such words as *corn*, *cart*, *court*, *mortal*, *murky*, *warn*, *wear*, *short*, and the like![1]

Whether a return, or even an approximation, to this pronunciation is practicable is a question which I shall not here discuss; but I am glad of this occasion of reiterating my opinion that the speech of educated Irish gentlemen represents the pronunciation of the English language at its best, — in the Elizabethan period, the period of Shakespeare and Bacon, and of our translation of the Bible. It has been preserved, at least in a great measure, among educated people of English blood whose forefathers settled in the north of Ireland. As to the silent *l* in *calm* and *calf*, and other clipped and silent letters, there is an illustration in "Love's Labor's Lost." Holofernes, the school-

[1] That the *r* in *iron* is slighted by many speakers, and by not a few who should be ashamed of such slovenliness, I had of course observed; but I was not prepared to find, on turning to Stormonth's dictionary, as I read the proof of this page, that Mr. Phelp gives *i'ern* as the pronunciation of that fine word. I could pardon him for pronouncing *pewter pewtah;* but to lose the *r* in the word *iron* is almost as bad as it would be to lose the strength in the metal. Without the *r* we should lose, with the rhyme, half the sense and all the edge of Butler's couplet,—

"Ah me, the perils that environ
The man that meddles with cold iron!"

master, speaking of Armado, whom he ridicules and scoffs at for his affectation in speech, says that he abhors "such rackers of orthography as to speak *dout*, fine, when he should say *doubt*; *det*, when he should pronounce *debt*, — d e b t, not d e t; he clepeth [calls] a *calf cauf*, *half hauf*, *neighbour* vocatur *nebour*; *neigh* abbreviated *ne*." And I have myself heard the *l* pronounced in *talk* and such like words in Cheshire, England.[1] There is no doubt that most of these now silent letters were heard in Elizabethan English.[2]

How great the difference is between the sound of Elizabethan English and that of the court of Victoria may be seen by comparing a passage from Hamlet as it is spoken now with the same passage as it was spoken in the year 1600: —

> "Is it not monstrous that this player here,
> But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
> Could force his soul so to his own conceit,
> That from her working all his visage warm'd;
> Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
> A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
> With forms to his conceit; and all for nothing."

Expressed as it best may be in the spelling of our day, it was then spoken thus: —

[1] On my mentioning this to a distinguished Oxford professor and author, he told me that he pronounced the *l* in *talk* and in all similar words.

[2] In taking this position with Professor Newman, I may be pardoned for saying that the view of English pronunciation which he presents was set forth in detail more than twenty years ago, in the *Memorandums of English Pronunciation in the Elizabethan Era*, appended to the twelfth volume of my edition of Shakespeare, 1883. It was reprinted by Alexander Ellis in his great work on the history of English pronunciation, as being the first attempt to show the pronunciation of the Elizabethan period. Mr Ellis gave it a modified assent, which I have good reason to believe would now be far more comprehensive. I am, of course, much gratified at having the support of such opinion as that of Professor Newman.

"*Ees eet* not monstroos *thot thees* player *hare*,
Boot een a feco-sy-on, een a dkrame of *pass-y-on*,
Coold force *hees soul* so to *hees* own *conzate*,
Thot from her working all *hees veesage* warm'd;
Tares een hees ayes; deesthraction een 's aspect,
A broken voice, and *hees* whole *fonction shooting*
Weet forms to *hees conzate*; and all for *noting*."

To many readers, to most, it will seem impossible that these can be the spoken words that Shakespeare wrote, and they will regard this pronunciation as ridiculous. A Hamlet that *spoke* the soliloquy thus would now be received with shrieks of laughter, if he had not before been driven from the stage, when he broke in upon the Ghost with, "O *mee* prophetic *sowl*, *meen oonele!*" But I am as sure as I can be of anything that I do not know of my personal knowledge, that Shakespeare so spoke those words, if he ever spoke them, and that Burbage so spoke them on the stage. This I said nearly twenty years ago. As to the ridiculousness of the pronunciation, nothing in pronunciation is *essentially* ridiculous. We laugh merely at that to which we are unaccustomed. We may be sure that Shakespeare would have laughed as much at our pronunciation as we do at his. And from laughing at "Hamlet" we are saved only by the fact that it is preserved to us, not in a phonographic, but in a conventional, orthography.

CHAPTER VI.

"AMERICAN" SPEECH.

I NEVER am at Wallack's Theatre without wishing that more people were in the habit of going there; or, rather, as that could hardly be without lessening the comfort and risking the safety of those who do go, I wish that there were four or five "Wallack's" in New York, and two or three in Boston and in Philadelphia, and one in every smaller town throughout the country. For there one not only sees good plays and good acting, but hears good English speech. Of the dreadful misuse of our mother tongue of which various eminent artists upon various "sensational" and "emotional" stages are guilty, I have said something elsewhere; and I shall say nothing more here, except to remark that the mere fact that these artists attain popularity with such an utterance of English shows how thoroughly the ear of the general public is depraved, how dull it is, how incapable of apprehending beauties or defects in spoken language. Indeed, the indifference of people in this respect is astonishing; and it is the more so because of their fussy sensitiveness upon other points of language which are of much less importance. Of the numberless questions in regard to language which have from time to time been addressed to me, — I can't see exactly why, and I wish that it had not been so, — almost all were as to what the inquirers called "good grammar," or spell-

ing, or some utterly insignificant and contemptible dispute.[1]

As to the most important points of language, speech, the manner of utterance, and the right use of words, few persons or none seem to have any concern. Every one assumes, or seems to assume, that his mode of speech is just what it ought to be, or he regards the subject as one of no consequence. The former is probably the state of most men's minds upon the subject, and the assumption is unconscious. For the speech amid which we have grown up, and by which our ears and our tongues have been educated through childhood and adolescence, so that we have adopted it unconsciously, is necessarily to us the natural and proper utterance of our mother tongue. We think of it hardly more than we think of the air we breathe or of the light by which we see. We are concerned about it no more than we are about our way of walking. Not even when those whose intonation and enunciation are bad find themselves in the company of those who are irreproachable in these respects do they doubt the propriety of their own speech. Indeed, unless they have sensitive ears and are more than commonly observant, they do not perceive the difference between their own manner of speech and that of the others. They will suppose that they themselves are speaking just as they are spoken to. But (and this is very remarkable and significant), let the person who speaks properly change his mode of utterance for theirs, even in a single phrase, and

[1] As, for instance, whether it is "proper" to say "To-morrow is Monday," or "To-morrow will be Monday;" as to which, although it is not a matter worth a moment's thought of any reasonable creature, I have received at least one hundred letters, besides the personal inquiries, which I fear that I may not have always answered with unruffled temper.

the change will be noticed instantly, and resented, either openly or silently. The self-confident and unperceiving person of a moment before at once perceives his failing, and is angered at being "mocked." Thus is the ear at the same time sensitive to the slightest changes in the speech of others, and habitually dull and unperceptive in regard to the utterance of the lips which are its constant associates.

It cannot be too strongly asserted, and it can hardly be too often repeated in the discussion of this subject, that no dictionary, no book on elocution, can teach the proper way of speaking English. That comes, as I have said before, only through the ear, by constantly hearing English well spoken, and by imitation, generally unconscious, of good speech. This is why a general and frequent attendance of the "American" public at "Wallack's" is so much to be desired, because there is no other place of public resort where English is so correctly spoken. I will not say "so correctly," but simply and plainly that there is no other that I know of where it is correctly spoken, and that I know here no public school of English speech equal to that pleasant one in which lessons may be taken by listening to Mr. Wallack, Mr. Gilbert, Miss Dyas, and their fellow-artists.

Usage, of the highest authority and greatest weight in all departments of language, is in pronunciation the supreme and absolute arbiter. With regard to others, reason, historical affiliation, and logical coherence have some weight, be it more or less; but if, for example, it is the habit of the best society to call a certain ornamental vessel a *vaws*, a *vaws* it is, and there an end; that is English. Now, what usage is to decide this question of the sound of the names we

give to things and thoughts and actions? — for that is pronunciation. Is it the usage of Texas, or of California, or of Tennessee? There are intelligent, educated, polite people in all those places, I am willing to believe (for I have never been in any one of them). But is the usage even of such people in those places a standard of the pronunciation of English? Is even the usage of scholars and professors and philologists there, or in New England, or in New York, to which I have been referred, authoritative upon this point? I think not. A man may be very learned, even in language, and yet his use of language, in construction, in the sense of words, and, above all, in their pronunciation, may be very far from an acceptable standard of English.

In saying that the standard of pronunciation is and must be mere usage, the usage of those who are of the highest social culture and position, I am merely uttering a truism. Indeed, this usage is the accepted standard of orthoëpy. The mere opinions of any person, however learned in language, are as the dust of the balance when weighed against this usage. Upon this point the speech of a well-bred woman, accustomed all her life to the best society, may be of more value than the opinions of a whole faculty of professors, although she may not know a vowel from a consonant. There is but one proviso, — that the society in which she has grown up shall be the best English society.

The complaint, which comes to me from more than one quarter, that the term "Americanism" is applied to peculiar use of language in a derogatory sense is not surprising; but it is unreasonable. For English is the language spoken by English people and while the most important and the most cultivated

part of the English race, that which is the direct continuation of the original stock, remains in England, where it was first planted and grew to maturity, it is manifestly to England that we are to go if we would find that which is emphatically and unquestionably English.

The usage of polite society regulates pronunciation; and that there is very polite society in Texas and in California the dwellers in those places most vehemently declare, and I shall not deny. But with the utmost respect for its intelligence and its politeness, we must all admit, I think, that it is not English society, or that it is so in a modified and limited sense of the term. Therefore, it is not to Texas, or to California, or to Maine, or indeed to any place in "America," that we should go to find our standard English, whether in word, in idiom, or in pronunciation. The language spoken in those places may be a very polite one, very admirable in every respect, but it is not necessarily standard English; and just in so far as it deviates from the language of the most cultivated society in England it fails to be English.

And this, true generally as to the language, is especially true as to its pronunciation. For idiom, the sense of words, and the structure of the sentence are preserved in English literature, in a great measure at least, to all English-speaking people. On these points the books of the best writers exemplify a standard to which all may conform, and to which in a measure most writers do conform. But books do not convey, they do not profess to convey, they cannot, if their writers would, convey the tones and inflections of speech. These are almost inexpressible. I think that they are really quite inexpressible by or-

thoëpists themselves, even to each other. "Webster" and "Worcester" are valuable in this respect only just in so far as they record and are able to express the usage of the best English speakers. Smart, perhaps the most unexceptionable of British orthoepists that have yet attained reputation, has only a like position. In any discussion of pronunciation which is not merely at second hand, we must go to the authority to which "Webster" and "Worcester," and even Smart himself, must submit; and any person who has not direct acquaintance with that, and who has not been able to satisfy himself, by his own close self-observation and by the testimony of others, of the delicacy and discrimination of his ear, has no right to speak upon the subject, except as a quoter of the authority of others; that is, not at all.

Moreover, as to pronunciation, "American" observation is very untrustworthy; for it is in this respect that the speech of the "average American," however "polite" and "intelligent" he may be, is most likely to deviate from the true English standard. The greater number of "Americans" speak vilely; they have a bad tone of voice, and very unpleasant inflections, in great variety of unpleasantness, according to the place of their birth and breeding. It is only in a comparatively small, although actually numerous, circle of people of high social culture, in New England and New York, and in the latter place among those of New England birth, or very direct descent, that the true standard of English speech is found in this country.

I do not refer to rusticity or to provincialism. A man may say *sarvant* for *servant*, *furnitoor* for *furniture*, and even *caouw* or *coo* for *cow*, and yet be

free from all the faults which are most striking and unpleasant in average "American" speech. Of these faults, the first to be remarked, as being both the most obvious and the most radical, is the lack of a free delivery of the voice. After you have left "Wallack's," or the company of people who speak as the artists there do, listen to the talk of people in the omnibus or the railway car as you go home, and if your ear is quick and perceptive, you will at once notice a difference in the mere utterance of the voice. With the former, it seems to come from the chest, higher or lower, with unconscious freedom, and without any other obstacle to the passage of the air than that produced by the tongue, teeth, and lips in articulating the syllables. With the latter there is constraint of one kind or another; the vowel sounds are not free, clear, pure.

The most common fault is that nasality which is not a snarl, a whine, or a grunt, but which yet partakes of the qualities of all these graces. We call it, or rather others call it for us, speaking through the nose. But this phrase is incorrect as a description of this mode of utterance; for nasality is produced by not speaking through the nose. That organ, instead of being left free to perform its important office in our speech, is more or less closed. It is spoken through, but not freely; and therefore I have said that the faults of speech to which I have referred are all due to some kind of constraint upon free utterance. If there were no such constraint or interference with the free and natural action of the vocal organs, there might be faults indeed, but they would not be such as are characteristic of so large a proportion of "American" speech.

Now, this constraint is due in a great measure t self-consciousness, to awkward effort. It comes, o course, largely by the mere contagion of bad speech for so come almost all such faults. Webster strangel attributed it to the deference with which all Ne England people treat each other, the consequence which was an effort to subdue the bold, free utteran of the voice.[1] The assigned cause is a very fanciful one, so much so that it is hardly worthy of serio consideration ; and whatever may have been the de erential politeness of New England manners in th lexicographer's youth (and there is reason for belie ing that it was great and general), it is certain tha the effect has survived the assigned cause. It is t be said, however, that in language, as in all other hu man affairs, effects do survive causes, which is th best reason that could be given for resisting the temp tation to step out of the right way temporarily, eve for a seemingly good reason.

This nasality of speech, it is almost needless to say is so common that it has come, very unjustly, to b regarded as a general and distinctive trait of "Amer ican" speech. There are households, there are even social circles, in which it is never heard ; there are families of the oldest New England stock in which the three living generations, from grandfather to grandchild, have not the slightest taint of it ; which is good evidence that there have been families in New England from its earliest period in which this mode of speech never was heard. And yet, as you take 'bus or car in the afternoon, hear the little newsboy cry his *Telegra-a-a-em*, prolonging the last syllable, and snarling and whining it out until it twists itself

[1] *Dissertations on the English Language*, 1789, page 106.

into your ears like a rusty cork-screw! And there is hardly one chance in a thousand that that little fellow is not the son of two Irish peasants, who have no more nasality in their speech than a bull has in his bellow. Whence is the direful influence that has brought him to his hideous utterance of that syllable? Why can he not say *gram*, which is so much more easily said? If his parents had remained in Ireland or had gone to England, he would have done so. In England, for example, if you want a draught, half porter and half ale, you hear the waiter or the barmaid call it *ahf an' ahf*. But go to a "dairy" here and ask for a glass of half cream and half milk, and you will hear it called *ha-a-ef a-a-end*, a strong emphasis being laid upon the conjunction, which is whined out in a little snarling voice; whereas in England it is clipped almost down to *'n*, and the voice is allowed to rest broadly upon the *ah* sound of both the *halfs*.

What is it that has so vitiated the voices of most "American" men, and still more of most "American" women? For there is no doubt that the fairer sex are in this respect the least to be admired. Among fifty men you will find perhaps ten or a dozen who will open their mouths and speak clearly and freely; but among fifty women not more than two or three.

This it is chiefly which here so diminishes the charms of that sex which in England delights the ear even more than it does the eye. Among the general public here, the public of the railway car and the hotel, the woman who has not this vice is a rare exception. You shall see a lovely, bright creature, with all the external evidences of culture about her, a woman who will carry you captive so long as she is silent;

but let her open her pretty lips, and she shall pierce your ear with a mean, thin, nasal, rasping tone, by which at once you are disenchanted. An Englishwoman, even of the lower classes, will delight you with the rich, sweet, smooth, and yet firm and crisp tones in which she utters what may perhaps be very bad "grammar."

In addition to the inferior quality of the voice in most "American" women, and their defective utterance, they have a fault, and a great one, which also comes of constraint and consciousness. It is an endeavor to speak with emphasis. This is carried to such an extent that some women emphasize almost every word they utter. I heard one the other day, in speaking the following words, emphasize every one of them strongly, with an upward nasal inflection, — every one but the last: "Say what you will, folks will talk; an' do what you will, you can't help it." Now, Englishwomen of the lowest grade don't shoot their words out at you in that manner. They speak with evenness and ease; and so unconsciously they speak well and please the ear. To the contrary method may be attributed not a little of the inferiority in speech of "American" women.

And since I am telling unpleasant truths about ourselves, I may as well say here that there is more of this among both Western men and women than among those in other quarters of the country. I recently went into one of our most frequented theatres to pass an hour. There was a scene in progress; and I remained for a while standing just within the door. A lady was doing some emotional business, with high manifestation of toilet and gesticulation I listened a few minutes, and then, turning to an ap

parently official person, I asked him who she was; for the situations and the personages of the play were unknown to me. "That," he replied, in a tone of some awe (for she was the "leading lady," and she had been playing to very full houses), and looking at me much as if I had asked a like question as to General Grant, or the statue of Washington in the square, "that is Miss ——," naming a Western actress of some celebrity. I listened for a few minutes more, and then fled the house. The tone of her voice propelled me from the door like a pellet from a pop-gun. All the emotional and sensational convulsions into which she could have fallen would not have allured me to sit under her ministrations of the English language for one quarter of an hour. And her speech bewrayed her as if she had been a female Peter; for I knew, before I was told, that she must have come from the region west of the Alleghanies.

The constraint upon the delivery of the voice which so generally mars "American" speech is not confined to nasality. It shows itself in various ways, to describe which is very difficult; while to represent them by any arrangement of letters is quite impossible. Indeed, a like difficulty obtains in regard to the description and representation of correct enunciation. In nothing do words fail so signally as in their power to describe words; in nothing do letters, which are supposed to represent sounds, fall so short as in conveying correct ideas of the sounds produced by the human voice. This I have remarked in regard to pronunciation; and in regard to enunciation the difficulty is so much greater that it amounts almost to impossibility. I can only repeat that constraint, needless effort, conscious or unconscious, seems to me

to be the chief cause of the common peculiarities and defects of "American" speech.

What may be called a throaty utterance is quite common, although it is not nearly so much so as nasality. It is produced by a rigid tension of the muscles of the throat and glottis, which gives a hard, inflexible tone to the voice. It is of all the defects produced by conscious effort the most striking in the revelation of its cause. It can be cured only, I believe, by opening the mouth wide, and by then uttering the syllable *ah* from the chest. This, indeed, is the one great remedy for almost all faults of utterance. Put in practice many times a day, it will, by patient trial, do more than can be done in any other way to make the utterance of the voice pure, pleasant, natural. This sound *ah* is primal, — the fundamental sound of all speech. Without the power to utter it freely from the chest, no one can speak well, no one can sing in a style that deserves the name of singing. Listen to all vocal artists of a high order, and you will see that they open their mouths freely, and pour out their voices upon this syllable *ah* right from the chest. This is what musical critics mean when they speak of a pure and free delivery of the voice. Now, listen to most of the dreadful amateur singing which your social duties require you to undergo, and you will observe that the singers are uttering, and generally with a guttural tone, *oo* and *ugh* and *igh* and *egh*, and all other vowel sounds except *ah*. Besides this, you will find that they undertake to sing the consonants; that is, all of them that can be prolonged, the *m*'s, *n*'s, *ng*'s, *l*'s, etc. On the contrary, the good singer makes the consonants as short and as crisp as possible, mere sharp divisions

between the vowels. Now, a good speaker does the same. Of course, the vowels are not prolonged by him as they are in singing, but they are uttered with the same purity and freedom, and the consonants are made mere dividing lines, the means of sharp and clear syllabification.

At the same time it must be admitted that there is often a remarkable unlikeness in the same person between the speaking and the singing voice and the speaking and the singing utterance. The former is sometimes thin, harsh, and constrained, while the latter is comparatively rich, sweet, and free; and what is more remarkable, a man will speak tenor and sing bass, and the contrary. The pitch and quality of the singing voice seem to depend, not at all upon the size of the man, of his chest, or even of his throat, but upon the nose and the frontal sinuses. I have remarked that most bass singers have these largely developed, and that tenors generally have straight or at least small noses and smooth foreheads. Notwithstanding the difference sometimes found between the singing and the speaking voice, what I have just said in regard to the analogy between them, and the advantage of training the latter as the best Italian teachers train the former, — as to utterance at least, — is, I believe, sound and of general application.

In regard to the pronunciation and enunciation of words, the striking defect of common "American" speech is again due to constraint, to conscious effort. The "average American" tries to pronounce too distinctly. He is conscious about his syllables, and seems to talk with the spelling-book before his eyes. He is in constant fear of the "dictionary," that Juggernaut of speech. The result is that while he may

slight and syllables unnecessarily be gives undue emphasis and a fullness of utterance to others, which are generally those that are passed over most lightly and unthought by the best English speakers. This is remarkably the case in the course of a discussion, even of the most casual and informal character. Then do the speakers dwell upon those important words, "for," "as," "with," "by," "and;" then do they lay themselves out largely upon the pre-fixes, "ex," "in," "con," "ad," and the like. It is amazing and amusing to hear them say ex-clude, in-clude, con-fer, ad-mit, separating the prefix from the following syllables, and even laying some emphasis upon it, instead of giving it a light and slight, although crisp and clear, enunciation.

Having had occasion to refer to "Martin Chuzzlewit" on the day on which this chapter was written, but for a purpose not connected with it, I was struck as I turned the leaves with the evidence of Mr. Dickens's acute and close observation in this respect. He was a caricaturist, and generally a gross caricaturist, although a most humorous one; but he was an uncommonly keen observer, and his perception was quite equal to his humor. There are passages in "Martin Chuzzlewit" which are rather rough reading for the American eagle, but many of them embody truth which is well worth the consideration of the very "Americans" to whom they will give the greatest offense. But to turn to the illustration which the book affords of the remarks I have just made upon enunciation. General Choke says that he is "ac-tive and spry" in his country's service, and the land agent at Eden that "there ain't no such location in the territoary of the U-nited States." The general

again says to Martin, "I wish you joy of your po-session. You air now, Sir, a denizen of the most powerful and highly civilized do-minion that has ever graced the world, — a do-minion, Sir, where man is bound to man in one vast bond of equal love and truth. May you, Sir, be worthy of your a-dopted country." The unnamed gentleman who introduces the great Mrs. Hominy says that she "belongs toe one of our most aristocratic families," and when he leaves her with Martin wishes her a "pleasant pro-gress." Captain Kedgick says, "Our people like ex-citement," and that nobody "ever comes back a-live" from Eden. General Fladdock, in New York, exclaims, "Oh, the con-ventionalities of that a-mazing Europe!" and again, "the ex-clusiveness, the pride, the form, the ceremony," — emphasizing, Dickens adds, "the article" more vigorously at every repetition.

Amongst his caricaturings Dickens has caricatured men and things in "America" grossly; but this is hardly caricature. I hear speech like this often; generally in public places, but sometimes, although very rarely, even in the most cultivated social circles. I know a lady belonging by all admission to those circles who never says, "I don't believe it," but, "I don't be-lieve it." The emphasis which Dickens makes General Fladdock lay upon "the" is very common, particularly among public speakers, when they are enumerating facts, principles, or planks in a platform. But even by other speakers and at other times the word is pronounced like "thee" instead of "the."

Much of all this comes from public-school teaching, and from the tyranny of the spelling-book and

the dictionary. Instead of speaking without thought as to their speech, these speakers are trying to be exact, to talk like a book, to speak dictionary English. A word to them is not simply a sound which expresses a thought or a thing, but something which is spelled, and which they must carefully pronounce according to its spelling. This is illustrated by the strange work that is made with proper names.

It is a rule in all languages, and among all peoples, that the pronunciation of proper names is, so to speak, arbitrary; that is, that their pronunciation is decided entirely by custom, without regard to the way in which they are spelled. But in "America," recently, that is, in the United States, the custom has come up of pronouncing them rigidly according to their spelling. Thus we not only have *War-wick* and *Wor-ces-ter* instead of *War'ick* and *Wooster*, but the Shawangunk Mountains, which in our youth were the *Shongo* Mountains, are now *Sha-wan-gunk*, with the *n* and the *k* thrust into our ears; and poor Lake Winnipiseogee, instead of its old name, *Winipisaukie*, has every syllable given to it that can be extorted from its letters by a school-ma'am. Delhi, a name absurdly given to a town in Alleghany County, is called *Dell-high*, when its real name is as nearly as possible *Daily*. Still further west, Terre Haute is called *Terry Hut*, an amazing conformity to the spelling-book. If an uneducated man were to write its real name phonographically, *Tare Hoht*, he would not be nearly so ridiculous as those who find its name, not in a word, but in an assemblage of printed signs. In the city of New York there has been of very late years a remarkable change of name effected by this rule of spelling-book. "What," said to me an elderly

gentleman, a member of a highly respected old New York family, "what do these people mean by *Dez-bros-sez* Street? There's no such street. The name is *De Broose* Street." He then informed me that the street was named after a family whose name was spelled "Desbrosses," but pronounced *De Broose*, and that until it appeared on the street cars it was always so pronounced. I myself have been astonished to hear the family name of an old friend and college classmate of mine — Van Schaick, which time out of mind was pronounced *Von Scoik* — lately spelling-booked into *Van Shake*. This solicitude to conform sound to letter has become a disease among us. It exists in no other country; and here it is due chiefly to common school teaching.

To those who have gone with me thus far it will be now hardly necessary to repeat that the mere fact that certain pronunciations are common among "polite" and "educated" people in various parts of the United States cannot be accepted as at all decisive upon the question as to the correct pronunciation of a single English word. On the other hand, it must not be assumed that even in England or in London, where the best results of English culture have been brought together for many generations, and where they have a permanent establishment and a traditional continuity of influence, there is a rigid uniformity of pronunciation, a standard by which every person is or may be tried, at the peril of being condemned as illiterate or ill-bred for lack of conformity. Such criticism of each other's language is not at all the habit of people of the best culture and breeding, who, even as to their own pronunciation as well as their "grammar," are generally quite thoughtless, if

not indifferent. They speak and write unconsciously the language that they hear spoken around them, and therewith they are content. Professor Whitney says, in his "Elements of English Pronunciation," that "he who cannot take to pieces his own native utterance lacks the true foundation on which everything else should repose." But it should be remarked that, unless I misapprehend him, this refers not to correct pronunciation, but to the comprehension of phonetics. Among those who speak the best English there is not one in a thousand who is more capable of taking his own utterance to pieces than of conjugating a Sanskrit verb of the seventh class; and this I believe no one would more readily admit than Professor Whitney.

CHAPTER VII.

READING.

In the course of school studies, reading usually follows spelling; and I believe that it is generally assumed that ability to spell must precede the ability to read. If by ability to spell is meant that of spelling correctly according to the received standard, this assumption is not well founded, as will be seen upon a moment's reflection. In the city of New York, for example, there are very few persons, if any, among those above the very lowest condition of life, who cannot read, and who do not read more or less daily. Newspapers are in all hands. But of these people, there are a great many, and, if we are to believe the complaints of the spelling reformers, there must be a very large proportion, who, if they were called upon to write a letter, or to take part in a "spelling-bee," would surely be guilty of some great mistakes in orthography.

To return to our newspaper readers, no proof other than their daily performances is required that spelling, correct spelling, is not a necessary accompaniment of the ability to read, and therefore need not precede it. Moreover, it is worthy of remark that of the many (absolutely many, but comparatively few) who would themselves be unable to write a short sentence without spelling a word or two unfashionably, nearly all would be disturbed if they found the

words over which they tripped printed unusually. The very mistakes which they made themselves would annoy them in print. They might not be able to point out the errors with certainty, but the words containing them would not "look right." In making this assertion I am not speaking upon probabilities, but upon the result of observation and experiment. The explanation of this apparent paradox is that, although we begin to spell before we begin to read, we learn spelling chiefly by reading. It is not by standing in a row and saying v-a-l val, e, vale, t-u too, valetoo, d-i di, valetoodi, n-a nay, valetoodinay, r-i ri, valetoodinayri, a-n an, valetoodinayrian, that we master our written language. It is not by remembering, or, as some folk say, by "memorizing," the syllabic construction of words that we learn to read them or to write them. The pretense of some of the reformers that we know the written form of the words of our vocabulary only by such a sheer effort of memory is absurd. This knowledge, like our speech, comes upon us insensibly, by use. We learn to speak by speaking; we learn to read by reading; and we learn to spell correctly by reading words correctly spelled. Those who read most spell most correctly and readily. I think this rule will be found absolute; allowance being made only for the peculiarities of some persons who are not ready at perceiving form in anything, and for slips which in others are due to lack of attention to the forms of some few words. There are intelligent people who, as I have before said, make mistakes in spelling; but all intelligent people are not constant readers. Some who can manage a great business, lead a political party, or command an army rarely open a book. All of those things could

be done by men who could not spell "valetudinarian," and who would write "college" *colledge*, as John Locke did. Reading and writing are not the beginning or even the end of all things.

Learning to read is now, however, the first step to knowledge, if not to education. I say now, because it was not always so. Before the invention of printing from types, and when written books were extremely scarce, so scarce that one was a present fit for a king, readers, of course, were rare. It would be a great mistake, however, to assume that knowledge and thought were equally rare in those days. Among the Greeks, to whom we are yet going to school in philosophy, in literature, and in art, the number of readers, even in the educated classes, was not large. Of the men who could, and who did, enjoy, appreciate, and even intelligently criticise a play by Æschylus or Sophocles on its first performance, or an oration by Demosthenes, very few ever read, and a very large proportion must have been entirely unable to read, them, at least with facility. Instruction was then given orally; and men remembered and thought about what they heard. The world's work, the higher part of it at least, is done by thinking; and education is not the imparting of knowledge, but the teaching to think. Knowledge can be obtained by special effort at special times, when it is needed; but the ability to use it, the ability to think rightly, comes only by exercise and by discipline in thought.

But nowadays we must all learn to read; and the cry goes up that learning to read, to read English at least, is a slow, toilsome, painful task. There is a demand for some easy way of learning to read; essays are written upon the subject, and books of in-

struction upon patent plans are published; one of them that I have seen is called "Reading without Tears." It seems to me that the demand and the expectation upon which it is founded are alike unreasonable. Learning to read must be a slow process, and those who are inclined to weep over toil must not expect to learn to read without tears. The acquirement of any knowledge or skill that is worth acquiring comes only by patient, persevering labor, which is shortened, indeed, according to the intelligence of the learner, but the lack of which no intelligence, no contrivance, can supply. With what semblance of reason is it expected that learning to read English should be easier than it is to a person with a musical organization to learn to read music, or that it can be learned in any other way than that in which music is learned? And, although in music every sign has a fixed value, one sign meaning one sound and no other, and even the duration and succession of the sounds being indicated by other absolutely certain signs, the acquirement of even very moderate skill in reading music comes only by long and steady practice. Every person with a voice and a musical ear can sing after a certain fashion, and so every person can speak; but reading music with an instrument or even with the voice is a very different matter. It is learned, not by the observation of certain rules, although rules must be observed, but by practice, by trying and failing, and trying again and doing a little better, and so on again and again, until, according to the old adage, practice makes perfect. Thus, and thus only, it seems to me, can reading be learned, all the complaints and protests and all the patent plans and reading-without-tears books to the contrary not-

ding. Speech of our mother tongue we learn
nconsciously, "naturally," as we say; but
is a very different matter: it is a mastery of
ning of arbitrary and conventional signs.
far as to reading silently, which every child
who is taught at all. Reading aloud seems
gone out of fashion, except among those who
some way professionally. It is no longer
ught in schools, or it is taught in very few.
generation has seen it pass away. The rea-
is is twofold, and is strange. For it is, first,
diffusion of education, and, next, the great
in reading. Reading aloud cannot be taught
classes; and consequently in public schools
rge private schools it has fallen into neglect.
there is no pretense made of teaching it,
even of this there is comparatively little;
there has ceased to be that individual prac-
re the teacher, guided by his example as
informed by his instruction, which used to
ded as one of the most important of daily
xercises. This is much to be regretted. Bet
o "branches" go than neglect reading aloud.
attention, in leading to exactness of appre-
in power of bringing the pupil's mind into
adaptability to the thought presented to it,
o exercise that can effectively take the place
ng aloud.
nnot read anything aloud well, that is, with
nflection and emphasis, without thoroughly
nding it. A pupil cannot scramble through
over what he knows that he is likely to be
on to read aloud. It is among the very
ducational disciplines. Besides this, with a

competent teacher, it is, I need hardly say, the very best means of acquiring that clear enunciation which is one of the greatest beauties of speech, and which any observant person will find largely lacking in the younger people of the present day. Good English speaking and good English writing come, except in cases of rare inborn faculty, chiefly by the reading aloud of good English authors under the supervision of a teacher who himself or herself speaks good English and understands those authors. Of such teachers, how many may be found in our public or in our private schools? Of such teaching, or of the attempt at such teaching, how much?

Reading aloud has fallen into disuse in families and in the social circle, because we read so much. The newspaper and the cheap novel have combined to bring this about. We rise from the table; we seize each of us a newspaper or a new paper-covered novel, and we plunge into their pages, and sit unsociably silent. We even resent the reading of anything aloud to us, because it interrupts our own selfish solitary pleasure, and because we think that we could have read the passage so much more quickly by ourselves. The pleasure of a common enjoyment is disregarded in favor of our own greedy devouring of our silent, solitary mental meal; the charm of the sound of the human voice, conveying to us shades of meaning and points of emphasis, is undervalued, and seems to be passing away as one of the delights of life. Silent reading is even destroying companionship, which now is to be found in perfection only among men at their clubs. Newspapers, thus read, are gradually extinguishing conversation. One advantage of a long dinner is that it compels those around

the table to leave books and newspapers out of their hands while they are there, and talk to each other to the r best ability. As to talking at a "reception" or a ball, that is impossible in any coherent, intelligent, almost in any intelligible fashion. And thus by silent reading and the neglect of conversation, language itself is coming to a kind of disuse. For language is speech, not letters; and we cannot really enjoy it or master it by hearing sermons and lectures and plays, and thus getting our speaking done for us, as the Turks get their dancing done for them, by others.

The foregoing remarks upon reading aloud when first published brought such hearty expressions of assent from so many and such various quarters as made it plain that I chanced to touch a subject upon which many intelligent people had been thinking. Others were manifestly set a-thinking about what before had been as far out of mind to them as an undiscovered planet. The warmest commendation came to me from women, who protested against, and asked me to scourge, the silent reading of newspapers. But while to a certain degree sympathizing with these complainants, I remember that I am not here as a censor either of manners or of morals, and therefore cannot undertake to scourge anything or anybody. I know that wives complain that if they are kind enough to read aloud to their husbands, the gentlemen begin to nod, and sometimes are even impolite enough to snore; and I have heard that even when the parties make an interchange of places as reader and listener something like an exchange of the other performance takes place also. Yet it is said that this drowsiness, so apparently overwhelming, is instantly dispelled

by the entrance of an agreeable, smooth-spoken ac quaintance, who has his head well stored with gossip which, if it be true, shows either that gossip is more generally interesting than the contents of books or of newspapers, — although many of the latter and some of the former seem to aim little higher than the gos siping level, — or that there is some soporific influ ence in the voice and style of the average reader. I am inclined to the opinion that both these conclusions are measurably true. My concern, however, is only with the latter.

It is true that very few people can read even an article in a newspaper in a style which engages the attention of their hearers. It is true that those who can read aloud for fifteen minutes without sending their hearers to sleep or out of the room are the rare exceptions. Whoever thinks about the subject at all must wonder if these people read to themselves as they read aloud, and if they do, what must be their appreciation of the writer's thought, — what their en joyment of it. For as we think in words, so do we read silently with such mental emphasis and such in flections as accord with our understanding of the au thor who is addressing us through our eyes. It is said that Mr. Tennyson insists strongly that his poetry can be understood and enjoyed only by being read in a certain way, and that generally the effect of rhythm and rhythmic emphasis that he had in mind when writing is destroyed even by the best readers. And if the reports of his own style of read ing, when he undertakes to show what is the hidden music of his verse, be true, then must the world at large be entirely deaf and dumb to the Tennysonian poetical language. Hearers of intelligence and cul

re, who are accustomed to the best English speech nd to the best reading, can hardly listen with decorously sober faces as the laureate reads his own verses. His accent is so forced, his inflections are so grotesque, and even his pronunciation becomes so strange, that to most of his hearers (of whom there have not been many) all the charm of his poetry disappears.

In the case of Tennyson this effect is owing to some peculiar notion that he has adopted, some elocutionary theory or crotchet. That he is wrong is a matter of course, eminent as he is among the poets of the day, and sure as we may be that he thoroughly understands what he reads. This is made certain by the mere fact that his reading has such an effect upon intelligent hearers, an effect so injurious to his poetry. For, having this effect, it fails in the one single purpose of reading aloud, which is to convey by clear enunciation and natural inflections of voice the meaning of what is read to an intelligent, or even to a not very intelligent, hearer. Intelligence, learning, literary skill, singly or united, do not give the ability to do this. I think that the worst reading that I have heard was from men who, as thinkers, as scholars, and as writers, were far above their fellows, even in the educated classes. They read with a heavy monotone, pitched high or low, but in most cases low, and with an absence of intelligent emphasis that made their performance about as interesting as the drone of a bagpipe. Well taught in many things they had not been taught to read; or they had a defect of ear which made it impossible for them to learn. For it is just as impossible for some people to learn to read aloud, with good emphasis and discretion, as

it is for others to learn to sing. The number of the former, however, is very much smaller than that of the latter.

And what is good vocal reading, that it is so neglected by many and so nearly impossible to all? It is simply the natural utterance of the words read according to their meaning. All that is necessary to good reading aloud is an intelligent appreciation of what is read, and an utterance of it with such emphasis and such inflection as are in natural accordance with the meaning of each clause, sentence, and passage. Yet the doing of this simple thing perfectly well is a rare accomplishment, and one which is found rather more rarely among professed elocutionists than, proportionately, among intelligent and educated people who make no such professions. So it is said that to walk well — well enough, for instance, to pass across the stage without seeming awkward — is a something that most actors have to learn, although all that is required is a natural and easy movement of the body and limbs; and that to stand perfectly still with ease and dignity upon the stage is one of the rarest of theatrical accomplishments. The reason of this is that self-consciousness, or the loss of self-possession, or the effort to be pleasing, — to do something, and not simply to be, — begets awkwardness, uneasiness, and leads to indulgence in little tricks and motions, all of which are inconsistent with grace and dignity.

Something of the same kind takes place when most people read aloud. They think they must do something more than to speak naturally what is before them; and thus they become either heavily monotonous or absurdly emphatic. In either case, their effort is disagreeably apparent; we see that they are

thinking of themselves (as awkward people generally do) instead of what they are about. For if they had in mind only what is before their eyes, and spoke that out simply and naturally, they would read well enough to enable their hearers to understand and to enjoy moderately what they might read. The voice might be harsh, or otherwise unpleasant; the pronunciation might not be that of the best speakers; but still the reading would be tolerably good. It would be natural; and the humblest and most ignorant and uneducated persons, speaking with the utterance and with the inflections that nature prompts in them, always speak with proper emphasis and proper inflection. Indeed, to read and to speak, in those respects, as they do, as anybody does (for in this respect all are alike), is the last and highest attainment of elocutionary art.

I remember a very simple but very striking and significant example of this, which occurred in the exercise of my reading class at school. We were all under twelve years of age. Our master, not a professed elocutionist, was one of the very best readers, one of the most effective, I ever heard, and he taught us with great care. On the occasion to which I have referred, a passage from the tragedy "Pizarro" was read, in which Pizarro, if I remember aright, approaching his friend's cell, calls "Alonzo! Alonzo!" The passage was passed by the teacher from boy to boy without remark, but we all saw that something was wrong, and every one tried to do the right thing, the result being, as I vaguely remember, more forced, unnatural reading than had been heard from us in a long while. At last one boy uttered, with free voice, the first "Alonzo" with a free upward inflection,

and the second with an inflection as freely downward. "That 's right," immediately said our teacher; "that's what I 've been trying for all the time. I wanted to see if there was not one boy among you that would say that just as if he himself was calling, 'Tom! Tom!'" One would think that a class of boys who were calling to each other so many times daily would any and all of them, have read at least such a passage naturally. But no; the notion that reading must be something else than a natural expression of the sense of what is read seems to take possession of almost all readers, and of none so strongly as the young and the uncultivated, — I do not mean unlearned. A woman who knows no language but her own, and that imperfectly, who has acquired very little book knowledge, but who is intelligent and cultivated, may speak charmingly, and read impressively. This, however, she will do only by the command of a good voice, by a thorough understanding of what she reads, and by losing herself in her reading.

It will always be found that poor reading is the result of the efforts of awkward self-consciousness, of mental dullness and natural impediments or imperfections being, of course, left out of consideration. Take, for instance, this passage: —

> "Life is real, life is earnest,
> And the grave is not its goal;
> Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
> Was not spoken of the soul."

How often it is read! how rarely read well! and simply because so few read it just as if they were speaking it of themselves to some one else. Usually we hear it with a dropping of the voice on "real" and "earnest" in the first line; a monotone on the

ine until the "goal" is reached, and then an-
dropping; in the third line the same dropping
voice at "art;" and in the fourth monotone
with a strong emphasis on "not" and "soul,"
dropping of the voice on the last word. Now
on would *speak* that sentence so. The voice
ise upon "real" and "earnest;" in the second
grave" would have an emphasis, and be pro-
with a falling inflection, while "not" would
hasized with a rising inflection; the third line
ll, like an inclined plane, from beginning to
ich descent would continue gently into the
ine to the very last word, when "soul" would
a marked emphasis by an upward, sharp ris-
ction. This would be simple nature; but the
read in this way has all the meaning that is
ought clearly out and made impressive.
; as I have said before, learning, knowledge,
ship, scientific acquirement, will not enable
ossessor to read thus. Mr. Robert Lowe's
int and implied expectation to the contrary,
ys, although they had been at school, could
d the newspapers intelligently and intelli-
him (he is almost blind), are quite unrea-
. As well expect a man because he is a
, or even a philologist, to write well. Some
, and even some philologists, do write well,
bly; but they are very few in number, and
bility in this respect is not the fruit of their
dge, to which it has no proportionate relation.
g, when not a natural gift, is learned only
ctice in presence of a good reader. Language,
anguage, speech, passes only from living lips
living ears to living lips; and reading is, or

should be, but prescribed speech. What can be taught of it is learned by the ear, and by the ear only. But there is much besides that can be learned; and that is, understanding, quick apprehension, the appreciation of the relation of thought. These come only by education; not by learning facts, but by education, of which more hereafter.

WRITING.

CHAPTER VIII.

ISH SPELLING: SOME CONSIDERATIONS OF ITS ALLEGED DIFFICULTY.

I lately walked up Nassau Street, that Cheap- of peripatetic vendors, I heard a voice crying, nee three cents furrup parrot wheezers wuth o sh'ln." I turned my head, with some curiosity the subject of parrot wheezers, and found that owner of the voice and of those articles held the r between his thumb and forefinger, while a or more of them lay before him on a tray. act, he supposed that he was saying what, ac- ng to the prejudices now prevalent as to Eng- orthography, would be written, "Only three for a pair of tweezers worth two shillings;" the purpose of his outcry was the purely phil- ropic one of vending those useful implements at alarming sacrifice. I did not become a pur- er, whether from a writer's lack of the coin nec- y to such a transaction, or from a dim conscious- that I was already the possessor of some half n parrot wheezers, vagrant and of various degrees tiquity and dissolution, it is not worth while icularly to set forth. But only a few minutes passed when I felt that I really owed that adoles- person three cents, if not more, for some reflec- which he had suggested to me on the subject of ish speech and spelling.

On what ground could it be reasonably maintained that he was not right in the utterance which I, with feeble attempt at phonography, have endeavored to record? Usage? There are more people, even among the educated, who call the little toilet tools which he was engaged in dispensing a parrot wheezers than there are that call them a pair of tweezers. I doubt if Macaulay called them a pair of tweezers. Mr. Everett might have done so. This being the case,— and I think that no intelligent and accurate observer of English speech will deny that it is so, — if language is spoken words, of which writing is but a visible record and expression, why is not *parrot wheezers* the proper name, and the proper spelling of the name, of the implements in question? The fact that there is a bird called a parrot, and that there are certain men and other animals which are called wheezers, and that the combination of those two words and things might in that case be supposed to be indicated, is of no importance in this relation. We merely use the same sounds to mean entirely different things. The old spelling-books give a list of words of the same sound, but of different meaning, including, for example, *ball*, a round body, *ball*, an assemblage for dancing, and *bawl*, to cry aloud. But, again, if language is mere vocal utterance, speech, why are not b a ll the first, b a ll the second, and b a w l the same words, — not seemingly the same, but to all intents and purposes actually the same? Their entirely different etymology and meaning are facts which have no bearing upon the question considered from this point of view. And if, as the phonetic spelling reformers declare, orthography should do no more than represent to the eye the sounds of words,

and should do that exactly under all circumstances, no matter what the meaning or the origin of the words, why should not *ball* and *bawl* be spelled alike, as *aspire* (Romanic, meaning to breathe) and *a spire* (Teutonic, meaning a sprout) really are; and why should we not write, instead of a *pair of tweezers*, a *parrot wheezers?*

The chief objection to our doing so, it should seem, according to those who take the view of language and of orthography just mentioned, is that by writing the words meaning a round body and also to cry aloud with the same letters, or by writing *parrot wheezers* instead of *pair of tweezers*, we should save no time. For your advocate of phonetic spelling is strong upon the point of the saving in time, in trouble, and in money that would be brought about by his reform.

These persons, the phonetic spelling reformers, great and small, but chiefly small, are now quite cock-a-hoop in their demand and expectation of a thorough change in the spelling of the English language, and they speak and write upon the subject in the spirit of exterminating persecution. One of them, writing to me, declares that "the ridiculous nonsense of the old alphabetic construction is simply satanic," and I have heard others of his stripe call it "fiendish," and stamp metaphorically up and down as they denounced it as a crime perpetrated at the instigation of the devil. These people are full of scorn and contempt for what they call the old, ridiculous way of spelling; speaking of it as if it were a device, and as if the present relations of spoken English and written English were the result of a contrivance which had failed miserably. Now, the simple fact is that those

relations are the growth of circumstances, — a growth which in the very nature of things was inevitable, and which, were we to have a new alphabet to-morrow, would occur again, beginning the next day after to-morrow. This the phonetic reformers do not see: their eyes are so fixed upon the discrepancy and confusion in such pairs of words, for example, as *are* and *hare*, *hear* and *bear*, *tough* and *through*, *daughter* and *laughter*, that they see no farther than their present perplexity; and their supreme desire is to bring us to a divine and heavenly conformity of sound with letter. That I am not misrepresenting them, even by hyperbole, will be seen by the following passage, quoted, italic and all, from the letter of the phonetic enthusiast before cited: "We do not want new theory, or misleading diverging roads; the narrow way is open; it *leads to life*, and for God's sake why will we not walk in it?" Simply, my good friend, because we have preserved our common sense, and have not gone clean daft, as specialists are apt to do. We spell as we do, and much as our fathers spelled, because we are our fathers' children, and our children will spell much as we do because they are our children. We are our fathers' children mentally as well as physically, and the language of one generation is the offspring of that of its predecessor, — a reproduction of it with differences unessential and hardly perceptible. You might as well attempt to cut men off from their progenitors in any other respect, physical, moral, or mental, as to sever rudely and abruptly the language, either written or spoken, of one generation from that of its predecessor.

The view of language and of orthography which is taken by the soberer and abler advocates of a radical

spelling reform is clearly and strongly set forth by one of our most eminent philologists, Professor Francis A. March, in an address delivered by him before the American Philological Society, as president of that learned body. I give it in full, because, coming from such a source, it is worthy of the most respectful consideration, and also in order that my readers may see for themselves completely the position which I shall examine: —

"In the first place, a scientific knowledge of language may be and should be the means of improving language itself. When there is talk of improving language, the first thing that a man who uses the English language thinks of is spelling. It is of no use to try to characterize with fitting epithets and adequate terms of objurgation the monstrous spelling of the English language. . . . . Spelling is often thought of as child's work and of little serious moment, but it is by no means so. The time lost by it is a large part of the whole school-time of the mass of men, and with a large majority of those who are said to read, and who can read if you give them time, it is a fatal bar through life to that easy and intelligent reading which every one ought to have at command. Count the hours which each man wastes in learning to read at school, the hours which he wastes through life from the hindrance to easy reading, the hours wasted at school in learning to spell, the hours spent through life in keeping up and perfecting this knowledge of spelling, in consulting dictionaries, — a work that never ends, — the hours that he spends in writing silent letters, and multiply this time by the number of persons who speak English, and we shall have a total of millions of years wasted by each generation. The cost of printing the silent letters of the English language is to be counted by millions of dollars for each generation. Who has not heard the groans of Germans or Frenchmen trying to learn how

our words sound, or read the petitions of the Japanese! And yet literary amateurs fall in love with these squintings and lispings. Their favorite old English editions extend the charms of their fair white paper, clear and graceful type, broad margins, and comely, trusty binding to the spelling which is used in them, and these old forms of the words have an aroma like the old leather of the binding, more delightful than wine. They try to defend them by pleading their advantage in the study of etymology. But a changeless orthography destroys the material for etymological study, and written records are valuable to the philologist just in proportion as they are accurate records of speech as spoken from year to year."

In the objections here raised to the present system of orthography — if it can be called a system — there is nothing particularly new, according to my observation, except the point as to the loss of money involved in the time spent in writing letters which are not pronounced. The irregularity, the incongruity, and the anomaly of English orthography have been asserted and discussed for many years. And it must be confessed that the objections made to it have much reason on their side, — *if* they are not made against an unavoidable result of the relations of spoken and written language. Nor shall I, for one, hold up for unqualified admiration a system which has, in a great measure, been imposed upon us by pedagogues, printers, and publishers, not however without great benefit to literature. But although Professor March is a philologist with whom any writer upon language might well consult his safety by agreeing, I shall venture to express my disagreement with some of the positions which he has taken.

In the first place, it does not seem to be so sure a

thing that a scientific knowledge of language either may be or should be a means of improving language itself. Science is essentially positive; and above all other sciences that of language is so. It deals with ascertained facts. Its function is the discovery of facts in the history of human speech, of their relations and their analogies, and of the laws, if there be laws, according to which those facts have been evolved. Reasoning from what has been to what may be, science may point out, not with certainty, but with more or less of probability, what will be the course of events in any department of human knowledge. Briefly, it may indicate a normal line of progress. But this, possible in other sciences, seems to be exceedingly difficult, if not almost impossible, in language. For the form and the very substance of language depend upon the working of an incalculable force, the human will, — say rather, as to language, the human caprice, the unreasonable, fleeting fashion of a day. And this capricious force, rebelling against no law, because it is rightfully subject to no law, is a constant force. Now in no department of language is the will so capricious, so unaccountable, and so untraceable in its action as in pronunciation, with which orthography disagrees, and with which, in all languages which have a literature, orthography has always disagreed more or less, the variation being least, I believe, in the modern Spanish.

Moreover, in all departments of language science would seem to be powerless as an agent, because, in the very nature of things, usage must run ahead of science, and usage is determined by an altogether irresponsible, irregular, and almost undetectable exercise of the will. Usage may not always make

right in language, but it must make fact. And as to pronunciation and orthography, science may teach through trumpets, but men will be guided, must be guided, and ought to be guided by usage, and not by reason. You may preach to a man from the highest pinnacle of phonology that he ought to pronounce *sewer* *soor* or *see-ur*, but if those around him pronounce it *shore*, as all men used to, he will so pronounce it.[1] You may prove to him in Barbara that he ought to write *through* *oru*, and if the people around him write it *through* he will so write it. He must so pronounce, he must so write, or he would be unintelligible, and thus fail of the very end he has in view in either speaking or writing. The misuse of words may be corrected by teaching; the art of using language effectively may be taught, or at least

[1] To persons whose knowledge of language is limited by what they hear from day to day, this pronunciation (as I have found) seems very strange. But the word was sometimes written in a way that would leave no doubt, if there were room for doubt, as to its pronunciation.

> "Loe how the man who stir'd Rome's comon *shore*
> Until it stunk, and stunk him out of dore."
>
> (Gataker's Life of Bale, page 500.)

> " . . . . the common *shore* of a city nothing falls amiss unto them [informers], and if there be no filth in the commonwealth they can live by honesty."
>
> (Shirley, Love Tricks, Act I., Scene I.)

> "Though she be Linsey Woolsey, Bawd and Whore
> . . to Venus, Nature's common *shore*"
>
> (Earl of Rochester, Satyr against Marriage.)

But enough: the nature of the thing makes the illustration of the word unsavory. This pronunciation continued in vogue until within the last half-century. I have heard it from old people. There is nothing so strange about it. The *ew* has the sound that it has in *sew* (*sow*), a spelling that is but just going out, and the *s* has the sound that it has in *sugar* and in *sure*, and which in the days of our grandfathers it had in *presume*, etc., and in Shakespeare's days in *sue*.

it may be learned; but how science is to improve language itself it is at least very difficult to discover, unless language is first formed by science, and is then imposed upon men by a linguistic autocrat, — one, for two would surely disagree.

Nor can I, for one, acknowledge that the first thought of every man who thinks at all upon the subject of improving the English language is in reference to its spelling. Certainly, there are many thoughtful, although possibly not inerroneous, students of the subject, who regard other possible improvements as much more desirable, and as not less desirable because of their possibility. Among these are the purging it of needless, cumbrous, and enfeebling Romanic words and phrases and constructions, the increase of its compounding power, and the attainment of a greater exactness and precision by a regard to the radical meaning of words already forming a part of its vocabulary.

That the spelling of the English language is so grievous an infliction upon mankind as Professor March, and some others whose opinions are of less weight, would make it out to be, I cannot see. Careful and cautious as he is in linguistic analysis, it would seem that here he has given loose rein to exaggeration. And I think, moreover, that he has misapprehended the facts, as some others have. Learning to spell a full vocabulary of English words is not very easy work for most children; but it nevertheless does very distinctly and clearly seem to be "child's work." For it is of that purely elemental, unreasoning kind, requiring only study, memory, and habit, which is peculiarly adapted to the childish condition of mind. It is almost the only thing that may be

taught absolutely and without discussion, which admits no question, and in a young child invites none, but which is accepted absolutely by him, as he receives it from usage and from instruction, — as he receives his spoken mother tongue itself. The teaching of it, too, is a task that may be left to almost any person of ordinary intelligence and education, quite regardless of beliefs or moral questions. There is not a religious and a freethinking, a Papist and a Protestant, school of spelling. As to its not being child's work, if it is not learned in childhood, it will never be learned at all.

Without doubt, it is not easy — that is, it is not very easy — to learn to spell English. But why should it be easy? It is not easy to learn to do anything rightly and readily that is much worth the doing, or to get thoroughly any knowledge that is much worth the knowing. To learn to spell requires attention, observation, application, memory. So does the acquirement of any knowledge; and one of the advantages of early exercise in spelling is the discipline it gives to all the faculties just mentioned, the proper training of which, and not the mere knowledge attained, is education.

The fact of first importance in the consideration of this subject is that *spelling has nothing to do with speech*, that is, with spoken words, with language proper. It is an accompaniment and condition of writing only. No writing, no spelling. Yet many persons, perhaps most persons, seem to think that the words they speak are made by being spelled, — that they are the result of putting together certain letters. The relation of spelling to speech, on the contrary, is not only arbitrary and conventional, but entirely unessential.

It seems, nevertheless, to be assumed by many people that spelling, that is, the use of this arbitrary, conventional, and highly artificial form of language, ought to be learned with little trouble or none. I should like to have them tell me why. It is not even easy to learn to speak well and readily. How many years pass and how much trouble is taken before a child of common intelligence is able to speak its mother tongue plainly and correctly! Some are well on in their 'teens before they accomplish that, and some never do accomplish it. There are certain sounds and certain combinations of sounds which they are never able to utter, just as some other young persons are never able to master certain combinations in written language, that is, in spelling. And why should we look for a readiness and command in the use of the arbitrary visible signs of speech that we do not find in speech itself? It seems to be assumed that all persons should be able to spell as they are able to speak. Why? It would be very difficult, I think, to give a sufficient ground in reason to support this assumption.

If pronunciation were not the varying — now slightly, now greatly, varying — thing that it is, and if every arbitrary sign represented the single sound to which it was first assigned (if indeed any letters, except a very few of the consonants, were so assigned, which seems to me more than doubtful); if sounds were expressible by signs, so that one man could communicate that which he means to another by any alphabet, however ingeniously contrived and however copious (which I think I shall show hereafter is not the case, even among phonologists), — if these supposed relations of speech and spelling were as certain

as they are doubtful, with what reason should we even then expect children or young persons to learn easily to spell well? What do they learn easily? Not arithmetic, I believe, although figures are unchangeable in their representative power and in their relations, and children begin to count and to reckon almost as soon as they begin to speak. Children toil over the spelling-book, but do they not also toil over arithmetic? In the days of feruling, for which did they suffer more, — their spelling or their tables, polysyllables or long division? According to my experience and my observation, much more for the latter. And with what result? We can most of us spell correctly all the words that we have occasion to use, and do it without thought. But apart from professed accountants, which of us could go through the multiplication table on the spur of the moment as readily and as correctly as he could write a letter, — something immediately ready to say in the letter being provided? I fear that at any competitive examination through which I might be put I should be found shaky in my "sevens" and "nines;" and I know that there are many persons who spell "like a book" who would share my uncertainty. The assumption that spelling should be more easily learned and retained than any other elementary branch of study, for instance, arithmetic or geography, seems to be entirely without foundation in reason. That the power of speaking easily and correctly should be general might be much more reasonably assumed, because speech is the distinctive attribute of mankind. But we all know that even speech, correct speech, is not thus easily and readily acquired; how, then, can we expect that the ready and correct use of the ar

bitrary signs of shifting speech should be acquired more readily, and retained so as to be more absolutely at command?

Spelling, however, is spoken of by the phonetic reformers as if it were the *most* difficult to acquire of all the elementary branches of knowledge. I am sure that it is not so, *except as it is the first to be learned.* Being the first real study to which a child is put, it is the one which is most tedious, and under which he is most fretful. The breaking in of a colt, to which it corresponds, is not very easy either to the colt or to the breaker-in. But once started, once broken in, a child learns spelling at least as easily as he learns anything. Some three years ago, in one of my country walks in England, I came upon a village school-house in Essex. I entered it, and observed the scholars and talked with the school-master. The former were about one hundred in number, and were the sons and daughters of the small farmers and peasantry of a very rural district; the latter had recently come there from "the counties," as he said, — Essex, Sussex, and Kent, and I believe Norfolk and Suffolk, not being called counties or shires, and the people living there taking some local pride in the fact, for reasons which I need not go into here. He was from Warwickshire, where he had had a village school; and he had had one elsewhere. In the course of my talk I asked him if he did not find it very difficult to teach his little folk to spell. "No," he promptly replied, "after the first, not at all; quite the contrary. The difficult branches to teach them are arithmetic and geography." His reply confirmed my own previously formed judgment, given above, and published two years before (as to which he

knew nothing; for I was to him only a p
stranger taking a country walk), and I am sur
it represents the true state of the case.

That it does so I am the surer, because
difficulty there is in getting a sight of a letter
is marked by any gross errors in spelling, and
nature of the errors when they do occur.
applied to men who, by the duties of their po
were required to examine scores of letters ever
and I have learned from them, and also fr
inspection myself of heaps of letters on their
at various times, that in ordinary letter-writi
spelling is the rarest of faults. One of these
men, who for the very purpose of correction
carefully thousands of letters yearly, — letters,
of which he knows are from men who have n
even a common public-school education, — to
that he had many other errors to correct, bu
rarely, if ever, one in spelling. Then as to the
of the errors. I have two letters before me w
have kept as examples. They were written
man who is wholly uneducated, who was brou
before the mast, and who has remained in h
condition of life, although with honor. He
spectable and intelligent; but he writes *I* w
small letter, carefully dotted, *i*; he spells *lik*
reef reff, *allow alow*, *hook hock*, *once wonce*. Bu
to be observed that in these same letters, "co
dore," "friend," "explain," "position," "af
"department," "execution," "transferred," "
action," "service," "consideration," and other
words are spelled rightly. That he does n
for these to a dictionary I know, for I have see
write letters, and a very good handwriting h

Now, this, according to my observation, is the rule: misspelling in every-day English is in the easy words, — those in which there are fewest letters, in which the letters have their simplest and most obvious value. This shows that the difficulty in spelling, such as there is, is not in the lack of exact correspondence between sign and sound, and that it is owing to some other cause. Only a few days ago I had occasion to look over a page of writing by a young man who I knew had been well taught in his early childhood; who had been to a good public school and good private schools; who had had two college graduates as private tutors in Latin, Greek, and mathematics; and whose associations had always been with well-educated people, — and he, writing words of many syllables and obscure sounds correctly, spelled *name naim;* but, moreover, he had spelled it thus *with the word properly printed before his eyes*, for he had copied the passage from a book. It was no mere chance, for I found that he made other similar mistakes in copying as well as in merely writing simple words. Plainly, it is not the difficulties of orthography which cause bad spelling. What is its cause I may not be able to show.

CHAPTER IX.

ENGLISH SPELLING: CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED PHONETIC REFORM.

"WITH the simplest form for a letter, and a letter for each sound in the language, there is no need of further theory; we want *action*." Thus begins a letter that I received from an intelligent man, almost rabid with the phonetic mania. Quite in the same vein is the following passage from a printed comment on some of my criticism of the spelling reform: "In the first place, it is absurd that any child should have to *learn* to spell. It is possible so to construct the sound signs — otherwise letters — that, having once mastered them, the mere act of speaking a word gives its spelling." And my first-cited correspondent says: "Fifteen years ago all the experiments were satisfactorily tried and the results recorded. The war broke up the interest, or Congress would have finished the work it began, to have all the printed matter of the country in true type."

These three passages from two quarters are worthy of special attention, because they embody the three great fallacies of the phonetic reformers. The first is that there is no good reason why the spelling of one's written language should require to be learned, — a very profound discovery, which, however, was anticipated by a gentleman named Dogberry, who, in his well-known remark that "to be a well-favored

man is the gift of God, but reading and writing come by nature," was, it seems, but a pioneer and prophet preparing the way of phonetic spelling reform. The second of these fallacies is that all that is necessary to make a change to phonetic writing practicable is the provision of a letter for each sound in the language; English sounds, according to this correspondent, being forty-two in number. The third fallacy is that this practicable phonetic writing being once discovered, it may be brought into general use by "action" of some kind or other, — whereas-ing, resolving, bill in Congress, or what not.

The advocates of a phonetic writing of English are of two classes, — first, learned specialists, whose opinions as to the past in language are worthy of the utmost respect, but who, as is generally the case with specialists, while holding the course of their specialty have lost the balance of their common-sense: just as a ship kept on one tack sometimes shifts her ballast, having it all just as before, but a little out of place, and being just as good a sailer as ever, if only she could be righted. To these are added a second and very much larger class of unlearned specialists, whose opinions upon language, past or present, are worth nothing, who never had common-sense enough to ballast an intellectual cock-boat, and whose proper harbor is David Jones's locker. It is with deference and self-distrust that I express difference of opinion with the former, however strong may be my conviction of their speculative error. It is not, however, in their writings that we find these three fallacies, but in those of the latter, who are the most numerous, and who are generally vociferous in proportion to their ignorance.

No one needs telling that if the number of sounds in a language is exactly ascertained, and an unmistakable sign is provided for each sound, while these sounds remain unchanged, and while the signs or letters are confined strictly to the expression or indication of the sounds to which they were originally assigned, any word in that language may be easily and exactly expressed — that is, written or spelled — by any person who justly apprehends the sounds and has mastered the signs or letters. Nor is there room for reasonable doubt that a word thus written will be unmistakable in its sound and structure by every person who has exactly the same apprehension of the sounds that the writer has, and the same conception as his of the force of the letters. But this is a condition of things which does not now exist, which has never existed since the world began, and which never can exist. It is not in the nature of speech or of written language that it should exist. If it could be established to-day absolutely and clearly by a power that had under control the actions, the thoughts, the feelings, and the intuitions of men for twenty-four hours, and no longer, it would not exist in perfection to-morrow; and before a generation had passed the difference of the relations between sound and sign, when compared with their original relations, if not so great as they now are assumed to be by the phonetic reformers, would be great enough to be made a subject of agitation by those who are born agitators.

This seemed clear to me, and I published it long ago; and when I visited Oxford I talked this matter over with a distinguished philologist and Oriental scholar, — a very eminent man indeed, who avowed himself in favor of a phonetic reform. After we had

arned the subject over pretty thoroughly, my part eing chiefly that of listening and suggesting, I said, " Well, professor, suppose all this done, considering he normal course of linguistic progress, what would e the condition of things in the next generation?" " Well," he answered, with a demure and deprecating mile, " I am afraid it would all have to be done over gain." But since that time I have found that Alexander Ellis himself, whose preëminence as a phonologist is questioned by no one, and who also advocates phonetic writing, expresses the same opinion, in the first chapter of his great work on the " History of English Pronunciation." In regard to the use of phonetic writing, he remarks, " Would our pronunciation remain fixed? All experience is against its doing so, and consequently spelling, considered as the mirror of speech, would probably have to be adjusted from generation to generation." The mistake of the eminent philologists who lean toward phonetic reformation of written English seems to me to be that they suppose the world would consent to this continual readjustment. They do not, like the vociferating phonetic crowd, fail to see the tremendous upturning of written language that would be going on; they know too much for that. But, looking habitually at language as a subject of philological study, and almost of manipulation, they think that others may be brought to regard it from the same point of view. It seems to me that they might, with nearly as much reason, ask men to give philology a like influence upon the breath of their nostrils.

This opinion seems also to me to be supported by the following important dictums of Mr. Ellis. He lays down certain phonological laws, which no one has

disputed, and only one of which (unimportant here) seems to me disputable. One of them is this "individual law," as he terms it: "A series of spoken sounds acquired during childhood and youth remains fixed in the individual during the rest of his life." Let this law be borne in mind in connection with the fact that no two distant places, even in this country, have just the same sounds for the same words, and that nicely discriminating phonologists say that no two men give exactly the same sound to the same word. Consider also another important fact in language to which Ellis calls attention (Part I., page 18): that at any particular time there are generally three generations living; that each middle generation has begun to exist at a different time from the others, and has modified the speech of its predecessor in a somewhat different manner, after which it retains its own modification, from which the following generation proceeds to change that form once more; and that consequently there will not be any approach to uniformity of speech-sound in any one place at any one time, but a kind of mean — the general speech of the more thoughtful, educated, and respected persons, — consider these facts and this law, which I am sure will be disputed by no intelligent person who has even a moderate acquaintance with the history of language, and then decide, if you can, what would be the result of an attempt at the phonetic writing and printing of English at this stage of its literature and condition of its journalism, and say whether the opinion that those who read books and newspapers, to say nothing of those who make them, would accept that result much longer than twenty-four hours is consistent with a condition of perfect mental sanity

It is difficult to see any other result of such a change in written English than that, on the one hand, there would be anarchy in visible speech, every place having a spelling of its own, and almost every man doing likewise; and, on the other, that the written English of the past would, in the course of a generation, become as much a dead language as Anglo-Saxon is. Now, to the real philologists this would be of very little consequence. Indeed, from their professional point of view, they would rather like it. Varieties of speech in different places would thus be expressed and recorded; phonetic decay could be easily traced; and the periods and localities of language would be marked unmistakably. Specialists and scientific men generally get into the habit of looking at the whole cosmos, and upon every individual, animal, or thing in it, and upon the very feelings and needs and habits and hopes of men, women, and children, merely as subjects of study and ratiocination. But this is not the way in which language is regarded by those who use it daily, that is, to all intents and purposes, by the whole world. They use language only to communicate with each other and with the past: all of them with the past for a generation or two, many of them with men of remoter times. I think that every one who has gone with me thus far, with certain exceptions (those bitten with the phonetic mania, whose madness is incurable), will now begin to suspect that the introduction of a new alphabet of forty-two letters for forty-two sounds would make the inter-communication just spoken of, if not impossible, so difficult and uncertain that people at large would not submit to it.

To consider a very familiar illustration or two of

this. There is a certain fruit which in some parts this country is called a *par*, but in others it is call a *peer*, while by the best speakers here and i land it is called a *pare*. But for all these pe the sign which expresses the name of that frui which expressed it for their fathers, and exp it for their children, is *pear*. Then there is the which grows upon the lower part of a man's fac have heard this often, and by various people, al variously *bard* and *burd* and *baird*, although b best speakers here and in England it is called *b* which four *sounds*, be it remembered, are severally *names* of that thing to these several sorts of pe Nor does any one of these sounds lack historical and analogical support. But the one sign of that name to all these people, a sign which they all recognize for moment they see it in a book or in a newspaper, *beard*. It gives these people no trouble whatever to recognize the combination of signs *pear* and *beard* as the indications of the names of the objects in question. They call up those names immediately, "on sight," as a man has the privilege of being shot in the places where some of the sounds prevail. But a phonetic printing of those two words would unsettle all these people. They would have to make a special study of them; and so they would with regard to almost every word in the language. And not only would they, that is, the people at present living in various places, be obliged to make this study, but all people forever afterward would be obliged to study

[1] The pronunciation of *beard* as *burd*, or rather of *ear* as *ur*, has striking and amusing illustration in this punning passage from a play of the Elizabethan period: —

"I hold my life that the black *beard* [black bird] her husband whoseb for her." (Westward Hoe, 1607, Act II., Scene 2.)

written English in the same manner. For, as we have seen, it is impossible, on the admission of all competent students of language, to fix, on the one side, the pronunciation of words, and, on the other, the value of letters, even for a single generation.

That time is lost, and, as time is money, that money is lost, in writing letters which are not sounded is also not so clear to me as it seems to be to Professor March and those for whom he has so strongly spoken. Time is spent, indeed, in writing silent letters; but so is time spent in doing anything; and looking at the subject from my point of view, and I venture to think from Professor March's, it is not quite sure that all time is lost that is not spent in getting or in saving money. I should be sorry to think that the author of the great Anglo-Saxon grammar took that view of even the humblest form of literary labor. And may it rightly and reasonably be said that our spelling is "a fatal bar through life to easy and intelligent reading"? Such an assertion, I think, cannot safely be made in the face of the daily experience of the readers of the millions of volumes and the tens of millions of newspapers and magazines that are issued yearly. I am very sure that the readers of those publications — those of them who can do anything easily and intelligently — read them with little or no thought of spelling, and entirely untroubled by it, even if they do not always spell correctly themselves. And as to the millions of years that are wasted in consequence of the peculiarities of English spelling and in consulting dictionaries, is it not safe to assume at once that the assertions of this passage are, to say the least, made in the very strongest possible form of hyperbole?

To the groans of Frenchmen and of Germans upon

this subject I confess that I can listen with a dull and unsympathizing ear, and to the petition of the Japanese that we should alter our spelling for their convenience, with a quiet laugh at their notions of the functions of a language and of the power of petitions and of legislation over it; in which, however, it must be confessed that they are not peculiar. The English language is made neither for foreigners nor for philologists, but for the use of English-speaking people it is made by themselves, for their own convenience, or, if you please, for their own inconvenience, and without regard to the peculiarities of speech or orthography pertaining to other peoples. I, for one, hope that it will never lose its distinctive characteristics, however difficult they may be of acquirement by foreigners. It might be convenient for publicists to have a common means of inter-communication, as Latin long was, and to a certain degree still is, among scholars, as it would be for merchants to have a coin which would serve as a common resolvent of all accounts, but the loss of peculiarities of language cannot be looked for while those of race, and therefore of literature, exist; and to deprive the world of these would be like depriving nature of her peculiarities of scenery and of climate. Without them life would lack its savor. One of the deplorable results of what is called the spread of civilization is the laying aside of national costume; and language is the intellectual costume of race. I would counter the petition of our Japanese friends as to English orthography by one entreating them to preserve their own costume, in which they are picturesque, dignified, and comfortable, instead of adopting the chimney-pot hat, the formless trousers, and the hideous coat of western civilization

in which they look like mulatto barbers' boys or ambitious monkeys, while they more than share our discomfort in our troublesome disguises by the unfitness of our clothes to their climate.

Complaint of our orthography comes from Frenchmen with an ill grace. If English has words the spelling and pronunciation of which are incongruous, French has them too, not less striking either in congruity or in number. If written English has letters which are not heard in speech, French has so many that they cannot be counted for multitude. Examples in almost every phrase in common use will occur to every reader: as, *monsieur*, *mademoiselle*, *billet doux*, *faux pas*, *il fait beau temps*, *je suis heureux*, *faites mes compliments*, *tapis vert*, *coup de maitre*. See also these words on the first page of the first French book that I open: "*où tant d'officiers perdirent leurs vies*," "*vous n'avez point d'état*," "*à partir de ce temps*," "*en doigtant*." But to make this point is work of supererogation. As to variable and uncertain pronunciation, it may be remarked, for example, that *e* and *u* are letters which have a very marked, and the latter a very peculiar, sound in French; yet *e* in *je* and *u* in *brun* have the same sound, the anomalous, obscure vowel sound in *tub* and in *come*, while in *brune u* has the common sound heard in the English *rune*, and in *brûlement* it has the peculiar indescribable and unindicable French sound; *e* in the same word having in the second syllable again the sound of *u* in *brun*, and in the third the common sound which it has in *encore*, which is that of *a* in *banc*. The *i* in *timbale* and in *épingle* has the same sound as *ai* in *pain*; and yet in *pair* the *ai* has exactly the same sound which the same combination has in English.

But why go into particulars as to the manifold incongruities of French pronunciation, which would be monstrous if they were not, as I believe, like our own, perfectly natural and almost unavoidable? And what shall we say of the many imperfect, mangled, half-stifled sounds in that language, making it almost ridiculous and almost unfit for manly speech, — sounds like those of *en*, *in*, *an*, *em*, *im*, in which all distinction of vowel and consonant is swallowed up in half-formed nasality, — and of *eux* and *ut* and *tre* final and *aille*, to pass by numberless others? Surely it would become French-speaking people to avoid making complaints of the pronunciation of other languages. Nor is German without like monstrosities of written and spoken language, although, as far as my knowledge of it goes, they are less numerous and less striking than those of French and English.

However, notwithstanding all that has been said, it must be admitted that the incongruities of English speech and English spelling are great and manifold. That, for example, *urn*, *earn*, *work*, *bird*, *were*,[1] *scourge*, and *tierce* should have the same vowel sound, and that the like should be true of *mine*, *pie*, *eye*, *buy*, and *height*, would seem at the first thought to show that in spoken and written English the relation between sound and sign is almost indeterminable. The frequently cited *through*, *rough*, *cough*, *dough*, and *lough* may well puzzle foreigners. But none of these, or of their kind, it seems to me, should puzzle or trouble English-speaking men. For, unless I am greatly in error, the perplexity and the grief of mind that many do bring themselves to feel on this sub-

[1] This word was pronounced *ware* in Shakespeare's day, and later. Its analogy is with *there*.

fect arise from a misapprehension of the facts. We do not really pronounce *u* and *ea* and *o* and *i* alike; nor do we pronounce *ough oo*, nor *uff*, nor *off*, nor *oh*, nor *och*, all of the latter being easily traceable to one guttural sound something like that of the Greek χ. No intelligent man, if asked what is the sound of *u*, would give that of the vowel sound in *urn*, or if of *o* the vowel sound in *work*, or if of *i* or *e* the vowel sounds in *bird* and *were;* all these sounds being in fact one. He would no more do this than he would say, on the other hand, that the correct utterance of a well-known line of Pope's is, *The proh-peer stew-die ohf mane-kind ice mane.* It by no means follows, because the word which we spell *lord* is pronounced *laurd*, that we pronounce *o aw.* Such a conclusion would reverse the relations of spoken and written language. For it is the former which is language; and the latter is a series of merely arbitrary and conventional signs by which we represent it and call it to mind. And this representing and calling to mind is not that of the elements of a written word, but of a whole spoken word. Whatever may have been the original relations of sounds and letters, of spoken and written language, such are the relations they have at present. Spoken language is one thing; and it is an absolute thing, self-existent and not limited and controlled, although it may be, and to a certain degree is, modified by written language, which is quite another thing. It may be objected that this is just what is complained of, — that this severance of the relations of spoken and written language is the grievance against which the phonographic school of phonologists protest, the wrong which they seek to right. To which the reply is that

this severance is involved in the nature of things; and that it is unavoidable, at least to a certain degree, except by such a continual change of orthography as would make written language as variable as spoken. This brings us to the consideration of the last point in the passage which is the occasion of these remarks.

Before considering this, however, let me, at the risk of violating the good maxim, "*Qui s'excuse s'accuse*," declare that, although I believe it to be true that, in Professor March's words, "there are literary amateurs that fall in love with these squintings and lispings," I am not one of those who are thus besotted. If there be a fibre of conservatism in my complexion, it is not in regard to orthography and pronunciation, as to which I am personally ready for very radical measures. I would begin, for instance, by turning *k* out of the English alphabet, where it has no business, and restoring to *c* its proper sound and functions; so that, for example, we should pronounce *sceptre* *skeptre*, and not write *skeptic* (any more than we should write *skeptik*) but *sceptic*, and write *thic* and *bric* instead of *thick* and *brick*. I would stay that tendency to throw a strong accent upon the antepenultimate syllable, merely because it is the antepenultimate, which not only mars our language by an awkward, jerky, anti-rhythmical huddle of sounds, but often hides meaning and violates common-sense, giving us such words as *ge-ógraphy*, *bióg-raphy*, *orthóg-raphy*, *sten-ógraphy*, in which compounded words the only stress is laid upon a syllable which has no proper or significant existence as such, it being composed of the last letter of one word and the first letter of another, each torn away from a place where

it sounds well and means something, — a tendency, or rule, or "law," as some folk call such whimsies, which threatens to give us, indeed requires, such abominations as *al-lóp-athy*, *ho-mæ-óp-athy*, *pho-tóg-raphy*, and *te-lég-raphy*. With regard to the last two words, however, and in a measure the first two also, the common-sense and the good ear of people in general protects them against this distortion. In spite of the dictionaries, they say *phótográphy* and *téle-yráphy*, and generally *állopáthy*, *hómœopáthy*, the second accent being somewhat lighter than the first. In all such matters we must conform to usage whether we will or not, unless we would seem affected, pedantic, and to a certain extent ridiculous; and therefore I suppose that erelong we shall be talking of *te-lég-raphy* and *te-lég-raphers*. But how much better the rhythm of these words, and how much more preservative of their sense, if they were pronounced according to their formation, with two light accents instead of one heavy one, *téle-gráph-y*, *phó-to-gráph-y*, *hó-mœo-páth-y*, *ál-lo-páth-y*, and I do not hesitate to say, *gé-o-grá-phy*, *bi-o-grá-phy*, *ór-tho-grá-phy*, *sténo-grá-phy*, hopeless as their case is by the bad usage of generations. This, however, only by the bye, and by way of indicating my freedom from prejudice against change merely as change.

Nevertheless it does seem to me that there is some "advantage in the study of etymology" to be derived from the preservation in orthography of the remnants of the elements and the roots of words. For example, a great many people say in affirmative reply to a lady, "Yes'm," and it is at least quite possible that such may become the general usage. Now here the *'m*, which is a mere nasal hum, is the remnant of *mea domina*, meaning "my lady," "my

[illegible]: "the steps of decay being, as I [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

word would not be very obvious, certainly not so clear as if he had found it written *celle*, although it was pronounced *shell*.

This is no supposed case. Among professional musicians a violoncello has come to be called a shell, and this name for it is spreading rapidly among amateurs. It has come, as any one may see, from a dropping of the first part of a long word. Its last syllables, *cello* (*tshello*) in Italian, *celle* (*selle*) in French, and *cell* (*tshell*) in German, have naturally and easily taken the pronunciation of *shell* for shortness and for ease; and we thus find the instrument spoken of by an abbreviation of its name, which omits entirely the essential and really designating part of it, *violon* (of which the stem is *viol*), and preserves only the diminutive affix *cello*, which again is degraded into *shell*. According to the theory of orthography and pronunciation which we have been considering, such should be the received spelling of the word, and we should write, not of a violoncello player, or even of a 'cello player, but of a shell player or a shellist. Moreover, we are called on to believe that the etymologist would find his path as clear in tracing *shell* as in doing the same with *violoncello*.

These are mere hints and suggestions of reasons for doubting the entire truth of the assertion that "written records are valuable to the philologist just in proportion as they are accurate records of speech as spoken from year to year." If there be no force in these reasons, we may, as far as etymology is concerned, write, instead of *phonetic news* and *pair of tweezers*, *fonetic nuz* and *parrot wheezers*; although there may perhaps be other than etymological reasons against the adoption of those as established orthographies.

CHAPTER X.

SPELLING REFORMERS OF THE PAST.

THE spelling reformers held a convention in England. And why not? Everything now is done, or at least regulated, by a convention. The cooking-stove makers had held their convention, and why should not the spelling reformers, cookers or cooks of language, have theirs? Not that I would by any means imply that there is as much reason in holding a convention to reform or to regulate written language as there is in holding one to regulate and reform the manner of making and selling cooking-stoves. For stoves, whether used to destroy and to render unwholesome and ill-tasted the flesh of eatable beasts and the fruits of the earth, or to make the air of houses unfit for human creatures to breathe, are *made*, contrived, and wrought with malice aforethought and by the instigation of the devil, — the first dealer and largest manufacturer and proprietor in the stove line; whereas language, even in its written form, is the result of a long and almost unconscious process, over which no man or assemblage of men has, or can have, any direct control whatever. Observe that I have said that this process is *almost* unconscious, and that men have no *direct* control over it; for language is made by men for their own use, and consciousness does enter into its formation to a certain degree, and man's will does indirectly control it. But no sort of men, however learned or skillful

...e together and lay down laws for making lan-
... and bringing it into vogue, as other men may
... and lay down laws for the making and sell-
... stoves. In the former case the thing produced
...e result of the informal consent of all those who
...e and use it, including the stove-makers.

... to the doings of the convention of the British
... ling reformers, I shall have something to say here-
...ter. I propose now to ask the attention of my read-
... to the doings of a few of the predecessors of these
...formers, or, I should rather say, to point out that
...ey have had predecessors, which many of them, in
...is country, if not in England, seem to be ignorant
..., or at least to ignore. Even a moderate acquaint-
...nce with what has been endeavored in this respect
... regard to the English language, and with what de-
...ee of success, would seem to be enough to check
...e self-sufficiency with which they propose to reform
...r written language by deliberate whereas-ing and
...solving.

In one of the delightful little songs that Shake-
...peare dropped into his plays is the line,

"A long while ago the world began,"

...hich suggests a truth that every thinking, observ-
...g man, who looks before and after, finds impressed
...pon him more deeply day by day. The new is
...tiquated; reform is musty; and even progress is
...oary with the snows of ages. English spelling re-
...orm is not a new "movement;" and not only is it
...ld, but it began actually before the language had
...umed the form which is known to philologists as
...odern English. It has always failed, absolutely,
...holly, utterly.

Some writers upon the subject have given to Sir John Cheke the credit of being the first to attempt the reform of English spelling. Cheke was a scholar, and a great one for his time — the reigns of Edward VI. and Mary (he was born A. D. 1514, and died A. D. 1557); and when very few men in England knew anything of Greek, he was professor of that language at Cambridge. He gave much attention to its pronunciation, and had a sharp literary discussion on that subject with Bishop Gardiner, which was published at Basle, A. D. 1555. It was natural that such a man should be led to like studies of his own language, and to tamper with its spelling. We may glance at what he proposed anon. But more than three hundred years before his day — that is, more than six hundred years ago — another man made a very remarkable endeavor in the same direction.

This first English spelling reformer was a monk named Ormin, who was a North of England man, and who about the beginning of the thirteenth century wrote a religious poem, or rather put into verse form homilies founded upon the gospel of the day in the church service. His work, which exists only in one manuscript, supposed to be his own, is imperfect, but consists of more than two thousand lines. Not content with such a serious performance, he must undertake to reform the spelling of his time, which was very irregular; and he wrote his poem in a spelling of his own invention, by which he hoped to indicate the pronunciation beyond mistake. His method was a very simple one, and not ill adapted to his purpose. It consisted chiefly in using single consonants after vowels which had their long or name sounds, and double consonants after those which were short or

e." The former sound we now generally in-
y the use of final *e* after a single consonant:
mple, *man mane*, *met mete*, *fir fire*, *or ore*,
But Ormin spelled *mane man*, and *man*
fire fir, and *fir firr*, etc. He believed in his
d spelling, as all his successors have believed
his own; and he insists strongly upon the
tion of it by every person who copies his
of printing he had of course no notion. In a
which I modernize in phrase as well as in
he says: "Whoever shall wish to write this
m I bid that he write it right, ... and
ook well that he writes a letter twice when-
s so in the book; for he may not else in Eng-
e right the word." Thus it has ever been
spelling reformer; he believes that unless his
is adopted readable English cannot be writ-
few lines of the poem will give a notion of
t produced by the system of this first of the
s of English spelling; that is, the first of
e yet have any knowledge; for even of him
be true that brave men lived before Aga-
h: —

Off all þiss god uss brinngeþþ word
⁊ errnde ⁊ god tiþþennde
Goddspell, ⁊ forrþi maȝȝ itt well
God errnde ben ȝehatenn.
Forr mann maȝȝ uppo Goddspellboc
Godnessess findenn seffne
þatt ure Laferrd Jesu Crist
Uss hafeþþ don onn erþe
þurrh þatt he comm to manne, ⁊ þurrh
þatt he warrþ mann onn erþe.[1]

following modern English version of this passage is as little
from the original as possible. —

It is not worth our while to vex ourselves with the examination of more than two lines, and a few words of this. Whoever chooses to examine the poem carefully will find two long extracts from it in Professor Corson's (of Cornell University) excellent "Hand-Book of Anglo-Saxon and Early English," by the study of which alone any capable person who is in earnest may attain a very fair knowledge of the early history of our language.

The first line shows by the doubling of the consonants that "of," "all," "this," "us," and "bringeth" were pronounced six hundred years ago nearly, if not exactly, as they are now. There may have been some slight difference in the sounds of the shortened vowels, but that is not probable. But we also see by the spelling in this line and in the second and the fourth lines that *God* was pronounced with the *o* long, to rhyme with *load* and *lode*, and that the *o* in *word* was pronounced as we still pronounce the *o* in *sword*, which, by the way, was once written *sweord*, but nevertheless pronounced *swohrd*, as we pronounce *sew soh*. In *Goddspell* we have the early form of *gospel*, and the double *d* shows that combination had already exercised its modifying influence upon the first syllable, the sound of which in the compound had passed from *Gohd* to *God*. The *d* was then dropped, the

Of all this God us bringeth word
& message & good tidings
Gospel, & therefore may it well
God message be called.
For man may upon gospelbook
Goodnesses find seven
That our Lord Jesu Christ
Us hath done on earth,
Through [that is, because] that he came to man, & through
That he was man on earth.

vowel sound retained, and the result was our *gospel*. In *godnessess*, the omission of the double *d*, we may be sure, was an oversight. The poem presents not a few such.

It is not worth while to refer to all the words which, according to this passage, had the same sound in the North of England six hundred years ago, even before the formation of what is known as modern English, that they have in the general usage of the present day. The reader who is sufficiently interested in the subject to care to know these will easily find them without assistance. But the seventh line is worthy of some attention. The second word in this line, *ure*, is *our*, and we see that the *u* was sounded long and with the name sound of the vowel. But that sound was not our sound of *u*. Ormin's *ure* was not sounded to rhyme with our *pure* and *cure*. It had the Continental sound, which we strangely indicate by *oo*, and which some gentlemen and ladies still give it, when, for example, they say *furnitoor*, in which they are merely a little old-fashioned.[1] The pronoun *our* was then and for a long time afterward pronounced *oor*. If any one thinks this strange, let him reflect how he still pronounces the other pronoun *your*, which I venture to say is to rhyme it, not with *hour*, but with *poor*, just as English-speaking people did six centuries ago. In the next word, *laferrd*, we have the Anglo-Saxon *hlaford*, a master, in an early stage of its passage into our modern *lord*. In the name Jesu Crist the *j* was sounded like *y*, and the vowels had the sounds which they

[1] Mr Ellis thinks that this *u* (*oo*) passed into the modern English *u* (*eoo*) as early as 1300. It is dangerous to differ openly from Mr. Ellis upon a historical point of English phonology; but such is not the impression left upon me by my reading

still have on the continent of Europe. The sound of this line, therefore, as the people of Ormin's day heard it, was, to indicate it as best I can, somewhat in a "glossic" fashion, "That oor lafurd yaesoo creest," which corresponds to our "That our Lord Jesus Christ."

Ormin's work is very valuable for the light thrown by it upon the pronunciation of English at the remote period when it was written; and we ought therefore to be thankful for the freak that placed him in the van of the noble army of spelling reformers. But even its evidence as to the sounds of words, as its author heard, or thought that he heard, them spoken, is attainable only by comparison and conjecture after previous study of the subject. As to any effect upon spelling, it had no more than if he had shaken so many types in a dice-box and thrown them upon the page. He called his poem "The Ormulum," from his own name; and well he might do so, for his attempt to make spelling conform to speech only shut him out from the rest of the world, and reduced his poem to the condition of an entirely private and personal affair, with one reader, — the writer himself. There is no evidence whatever that any other person than he ever read a page of it until within the last half century or so, when it was found to have a philological interest and value. It was known to scholars; but even they passed it by, supposing it to be Gothic, not dreaming that it was English. And such, in a great measure at least, must be the result of any effort, whether made by one man or a hundred, to get up a new and "reasonable" orthography.

Let us now consider our subject in connection with the labors of other early spelling reformers, who, however, did not prove to be reformers of spelling.

Of these, Sir John Cheke, already mentioned, was the second of whom we have any knowledge. His biographer, Strype, tells us that Cheke was led into his efforts at reform because "the writing and spelling of our English tongue was in those times very bad, even scholars themselves taking little heed how they spelt." By very bad spelling Strype meant very irregular and unsettled spelling. The phonetic reformers would regard the spelling just before Cheke's day as really better than that of Strype's day (about two centuries ago), which is to all intents and purposes that now in use; for the former was more phonetic. People then spelled without reference to any standard, for there was none, and merely with the purpose of expressing by letters, after a fashion and as the notion took them, the sounds which they gave to words. The consequence was irregularity, or what Strype calls, and what would now be called, bad spelling.

It is to be remarked, as being much to our purpose, that the very scholars who spelled English so badly or irregularly spelled Latin very well, that is, with strict conformity to one standard. Now, the reason of this difference is that Latin was a dead language and English a living one. Since the revival of learning, at least, there has been but one way of spelling Latin among all peoples, — the way in vogue at the Ciceronian period. As to this, scholars were and are very particular; and what was known as "literature" before Cheke's day, and for some time afterward, was written in Latin. Men of letters then wrote their books and serious treatises, and even held their oral discussions, in Latin, which was called the universal language. Their own languages they held in a kind

of contempt, each calling his own respectively "the vulgar tongue," *vulgar* here having had, however, its original meaning, common, with, nevertheless, a suggestion that what was common was also unclean. But Latin, when it was a living language, a speech, varied in its spelling from time to time, and even with individuals. Latin of only two generations before Cicero's day was not spelled as he spelled it; and although the Roman literature of the Augustan age did, by its supremacy, much to fix the language in its written form, it erelong began to change. The people at large then did not write, and therefore did not spell; for spelling has nothing to do with speech, even correct and elegant speech; and the spelling of later periods, as it appears in inscriptions, and even in manuscripts, is not that of Cicero and his contemporaries and immediate successors. The bad or irregular spelling of English, and also of other languages, three hundred years ago, was phonetic, and was due chiefly to the absence of any standard. The phonetic spelling reformers are scornful of the accepted spelling of English, because, as they say, it has been imposed upon us by printers and proof-readers. But it is to the introduction of printing that we owe it that there is any uniformity in our spelling. The diffusion of printed books among the people, and the abandonment by men of letters of Latin for "the vulgar tongue," which became necessary when they ceased to write only for the learned class, and addressed what we now call the general public, made uniformity desirable, if not necessary, and that uniformity was brought about — very gradually indeed — by the despised printers and proof-readers.[1]

[1] As to the correctors of the press, it seems to me that their influence can

Cheke's endeavor was in the contrary direction from Ormin's. Ormin attempted to indicate the true sound of vowels by the use of consonants, using the latter doubly or singly for that purpose. Cheke directed his attention to the vowels themselves. The final *e*, which now generally has only the function of indicating a long sound in a preceding vowel, had once, generally, an historical and phonetic significance. This it had ceased to have even before Cheke's day; and he would have done away with it altogether, spelling, for example, thus: *excus*, *prais*, *commun*, instead of *excuse*, *praise*, *commune*. But in other words, inconsistently, it would seem, he indicated the long sound by doubling the vowel, writing *maad*, *great*, *daar*, for *made*, *strait* (or *straight*), *dare*, which Ormin would have written *mad*, *strat*, *dar*. Like all phonetic reformers of spelling, he was intolerant of silent letters, and wrote *frute*, *wold*, *faut*, *dout*, for *fruit*, *would*, *fault*, and *doubt*. By these spellings we see that in his day — and it was so long afterward — the *l* was pronounced in *would* and was not pronounced in *fault*. The fashion has changed since then, and we now leave the *l* out of *would*, and pronounce it in *fault*. The latter is an instance of the most common change in pronunciation, in which the progress of time much oftener destroys letters than restores them. It is needless to give more time to Cheke's attempted spelling reforms. They had no effect whatever. Printers and proof-readers had more

have been otherwise than for good upon written language. For myself, I have owed so much to the intelligence, the carefulness, and the kind-nature of proof-readers, they have so often saved me from the consequences of haste and human imperfection, and I have found them generally so capable of their work, and so faithful and willing and patient in the doing of it, that I feel as if I ought gladly to acknowledge them as fellow craftsmen, to whom it becomes me to be grateful and respectful.

power in this direction than the distinguished
who "taught Cambridge and King Edward
Soon after Cheke's death, Sir Thomas Smith
lished, in 1568, a book, the object of which
improve orthography. Although the object of
deavor was English orthography, he wrote his
in Latin. It was "De Recta et Emendata
Anglicanæ Scriptione," — concerning a corre
amended writing of the English language.
early day he proposed a phonetic alphabet;
was, I believe, the first to do so. His failu
am right, was the first of a long series of like f
efforts. The craze has since then been cont
The very next year, 1569, John Hart, who was
ter Herald, published a book the purpose of
was to induce people to spell phonetically, th
might represent exactly the sounds they utt
speech. He condescended to write in English.
book was "An Orthographie containing th
Order and Reason howe to Write or Paint th'
of Mannes Voice most like to Life or Nature;
his preface was addressed "To the doubtfull
English Orthographie." In this preface, after
ing orthography, he says that according to
"ought to use an order in writing which, n
cared for unto this day, our predecessors have
it were) drowned in a maner of negligence,
contented with such maner of writing as they
now have found from age to age, without any
to the several parts of the voice, which the
ought to represent." He closes his address
"And accordinglye here foloweth a certain or
true writing of the speech, and founded upon
— mother of all sciences; wherewith you ma

pily be profited; and so health and the grace of God be with you. So be it."

With the Chester herald's true writing of the speech we need not trouble ourselves. Having been "founded upon reason," which would seem to be the poorest of supports in orthography, it is now mere matter of literary curiosity, of little or no interest to the general reader. But it is worth our while to look at the spelling which he speaks of so contumeliously, calling it elswhere, just as our phonetic reformers of to-day do, "disorder and confusion." In the passages quoted above, his spelling is exactly followed; and how much does the disorder and confusion of more than three hundred years ago differ from that to-day? Hardly at all. There is no essential difference between the spelling of this John Hart who wrote in 1569 and that of a John Hart who might write or has written in 1879. Throughout those two passages which I have quoted for their substance, and which fairly represent the author's spelling, there are only five words which differ from our present standard; and they differ not essentially in the radical sounds and letters, but merely by an *e* more or less, *y* for *i*, or two consonants instead of one. No person who can read at all would have any more difficulty in reading John Hart's book, which was printed three hundred years ago, than he would if it had been written and published three hundred years later; nor is there a reason graver than conformity to fashion why any person should not now spell just as he did. What great matter is it whether we write *learn* or *learne*, *we* or *wee*? Uniformity is indeed desirable, although it is not essential; and our friends the printers and proof-readers will insure it if we print our

writing. If we do not print it, the consequences of such small and unessential variation as there is between Hart's spelling and ours are not worth five minutes' thought by any reasonable creature. The great faults of our every-day English are in much graver matters than this is; and there are people in a constant twitter of apprehension about their spelling and their "grammar" who might well let those go uncared for, while they give their attention to speaking and writing sense in words that express their meaning.

The sameness of Hart's spelling with our own in all essential points, and the rare and very slight differences in the unessential, have a lesson for those who will learn it. Here was a man who endeavored to upturn the written English language, and who thought that he would do so; and yet, after three hundred years of continuous effort like his, our orthography — if orthography it must be called — is to all intents and purposes just what he found it. As the centuries have slowly gone by, the writers of English have dropped a letter here and there (very rarely one which had any etymological or phonetic value); but our written language has remained essentially the same that it was when he undertook its reformation.

A hundred years passed by, not unvexed by phonetic reformers, when the most pretentious of them all appeared. This was John Wilkins, Dean of Ripon,[1] who published, in 1668, "An Essay toward a Real Character and a Philosophical Language." His "essay," unlike the essays of Bacon, who first used the word in this sense, made a large folio. Its title is significant, because it contains a strong expression

[1] Afterwards Bishop of Chester

of the misleading fancy which has beguiled all reformers of this class. He sought a "real character" and a "philosophical" language. The notion which takes possession of these men is that there is, or ought to be, and that there may be, some real connection between spoken words and the signs used to express them, and that language may be made philosophical, — a kind of scientific structure. Now, there is no such real connection, nor has there ever been any such structure, except perhaps the Sanskrit language. Written language is composed of arbitrary and conventional signs; and hieroglyphics, or numerical figures, or stenographic lines and dots, are no less written language than letters. A painted crow and a K signifies "croquet" just as well as seven letters do, besides being so exquisitely funny; and if we could have one sign for each syllable that we utter, instead of being obliged to use from two to three or four, the device would answer our purposes. Moreover, language, written or spoken, is not philosophical or a science; although there is a science of language, which is a very different matter. It is only an art, — the first and homeliest of all arts, — a mere device for communication between man and man; and its only object is to make that communication as clear and sure as possible.

Dean Wilkins invented a phonetic alphabet, using about four hundred and fifty characters to express various shades of sound. He also anticipated one of the most prominent of the phonologists of our day, Bell, in his lately published "Visible Speech," by showing the mode of formation of the sounds of the principal letters. He engraved diagrams of about thirty-five heads with one jaw and a side of the neck

cut away, to show the action of tongue, palate, and glottis. He had also the faith in his system which is characteristic of reformers, and moreover that contempt for others which is common to most of them. He says: —

"As for those other new alphabets that are prepared by Sir Thomas Smith [mentioned above], Bullokar, and Alexander Gill, they do none of them give a just imitation of the simple elements of speech; but, what by the mixture of long and short words, which do not differ specifically, together with the insertion of double letters, they do too much increase the number of them. Besides that, some other letters are left out and omitted."

Thus it ever is: my panacea is the great remedy; as for "those others," they are of no value. Observe, by the way, that in the hundred years that passed between Hart and Wilkins written English became just what it is at present. The passage quoted from Wilkins, although it was written and printed more than two centuries ago, would pass muster at a spelling bee to-day. Observe also at the end the words "left out and omitted." The first two and the last have exactly the same meaning; and his word 'and" is superfluous or misleading. This union of English words and Romance words to express one thought is common in books written two hundred or three hundred years ago. The Common Prayer Book is full of examples of it.[1]

[1] The union was not always that of an English word with one of Latin origin, but was sometimes, although rarely, that of an uncommon with a common word. Of this absurd practice, the most marked instance that I recall is in the following couplet from George Marshall's *Compendious Treatise in Metre, declaring the First Originall of Sacrifice*, A. D. 1554: —

"That Peter and ye Apostles so sore was affrayd,
That in *spelunkes* and caves there theı masse said"

That is, that in caves and caves, etc.; for *spelunc* is merely an English form of the Latin word for cave.

I give below the Lord's Prayer as it is printed by Dean Wilkins, after a phonetic fashion which shows that Mr. Ellis's "glossic,"[1] or a mode of spelling which is to all intents and purposes the same, is more than two hundred years old. In this *y* is used to express that obscure sound in English which is heard in *us*, and which begins so many diphthongal sounds, as *ah-oor*, *our*, *thah-ee*, *thy*. I am obliged to use an italic *ou* in the place of an obsolete Greek character, a contraction of omicron and upsilon, which Wilkins uses for the sound *oo*. I has our sound of *ee*.

"Your fadher houitsh art in héven halloëd bi dhyi nam, dhyi cingdym cym, dhyi *ou*ill bi dyn, in erth az it iz in heven; giv ys dhis dai *your* daili bred, and fargiv ys *your* trespassez as *ou*ii fargiv dhem dhat trespas against ys, and led ys nat into*u* temptaisian, byt deliver ys fram ivil. far dhyn iz dhe cingdym, dhi pyoner and dhi glari, far ever and ever. Amen."

Notwithstanding Dean Wilkins's great and ingenious labor and equal self-confidence, his book has gone with its predecessors and most of its successors into the literary dust bin; and we need trouble ourselves no further with him and not at all with the other spelling reformers of past days.

[1] See Chapter XIII.

CHAPTER XI.

MODERN ORTHOGRAPHY AND ITS REFORMATION

THREE quarters of a century ago, and more, John Walker thought that he had settled the principles of English pronunciation. His pronouncing dictionary was a valuable work, and had a beneficial influence upon our language; but he did not settle the principles of English pronunciation, for the very good reason that it had no principles to be settled. His introductory treatise, in which he professed to have accomplished what no doubt seemed to him a very important purpose, is after all (like so much other so-called philology) a mere classification of usage, — the usage of his time, — with an attempt to reconcile some discrepancies, and to enforce a few analogies. His attempts, and those of other orthoëpists, to lay down rules are grounded upon the false assumption that language is a combination of signs, and that the tones and articulations of those who speak it are, or should be, determined by the signs used by those who write it. On the contrary, language is a combination of sounds; and the proper function of the signs of written language is not to express, but rather to call to mind, those combinations, so far as it is possible for signs to suggest sounds.

This was the original function of letters, and it still is their legitimate function; but the effect of the diffusion of books and of the ability to read them has been to make the question practically, for many

people, not how certain sounds shall be expressed, but how certain combinations of letters shall be pronounced.

Take, for example, the broad sound of *a* as in *father*. This may be regarded as the primitive human utterance; and it was in very remote times the most frequently heard sound in human speech. We may be as sure as we can be of anything in regard to the sounds of speech in the past that the sign A, when it was first used, represented that sound only. These assertions seem somewhat over-positive. But all indications point so clearly to these initial facts of speech and of writing that there can be little risk in taking them as established, with the modification — whatever it may be — of the other fact, that written language followed spoken language at a distance in time now quite incalculable.

With the progress of ages, however, the words into the composition of which the sound indicated by this letter A had entered were changed in their pronunciation, so that (for example, merely) the broad *ah* sound passed into the vowel sounds of *all*, *last*, and *hat*. But although the sound was varied, the form of the letter remained unchanged; and thus it has come to be said that A has such and such different sounds. This statement, however useful it may be in practical spelling and pronouncing, is not strictly true. For, as the fact has come to be, it is not that this letter and others have various sounds, but that certain combinations of letters have for a period more or less long represented certain things or thoughts, the spoken names of which have varied in their pronunciation.

There are very few letters, even among the consonants, which absolutely represent a certain sound

and as to some words the assertion that the letters are pronounced thus and so cannot be made without manifest absurdity. For example, no fusion of any sounds pertaining to *g* and *h* will result in *f*, and the same may be said of *p* and *h*; nor is the combined sound of *t* and *h* that of . And yet in *rough* and *laughter* the written *gh* corresponds to the spoken *f*, as *ph* does in *phial* and in *photograph*; and in *thane*, *thick*, *thin*, *th* corresponds to the spoken Saxon ð and the Greek θ. Yet no man can utter a *g* and an *h* so as to produce the sound of *f*. It is impossible; and so it is as to *ph* and *f*, and *th* and θ. These marked examples illustrate the very important fact that written language has long ceased to be merely an exact indication of sound, if indeed it ever were so after the days of the first generation of writing-men. It may with truth be urged that the examples are extreme, and that they hold only in English. But if extreme, they are characteristic; and although they are English they are not without parallels in most other living tongues which have been written for some centuries.[1]

The one great misleading assumption, as it appears to me, in the general consideration of this department of language is that our speech is the conscious utterance of a combination of certain specific sounds for which we have distinctly corresponding letters. That it is not so will be manifest, if we suppose that to-night all books and writings, and all memory of them, should perish. Language would still exist in perfection. To-morrow we should be speaking exactly as we do to-day. There would not be a word, a sound, an inflection lost from the language; only

[1] *Ph* and *th* are early Greek combinations for which φ and θ were substituted

certain of us would not be consulting dictionaries, and vexing our souls and the souls of other men who never look at dictionaries, to know what is the proper pronunciation of *exquisite*. But if, on the other hand, speech and the memory of it were lost, all the books and all the writings in the world would cease to be books and writings, and become merely soiled paper, fit only to kindle fires withal; and man would relapse into a savagery below that of the African Bushman, probably even into that of his forefather, — in the Genesis according to Darwin, — an ape, and be unable to make a fire of his books even to keep his unclothed body warm. Truths these sufficiently obvious, one would think; and yet they are truths the significance of which is continually disregarded.

The inversion of the proper order of things in this matter is illustrated by Dr. Johnson's relation of his experience in regard to the word *great*, which Lord Chesterfield told him should be pronounced so as to rhyme with *state*; but Sir Charles Young said that it should be pronounced so as to rhyme with *seat*, and that none but an Irishman would pronounce it *grate*. Now, both those accomplished men (the one the first speaker in the Lords, the other in the Commons) wrote that word in the same way; but does it follow that the difference in their pronunciation of it was caused by one of them pronouncing the combination *ea* with the vowel sound of *state*, and the other's pronouncing it with that of *meet*? How was it then with *seat*, to which we know by implication they both gave the latter sound? And yet there is not a fact in the history of language better established than that at the time of the grandfathers of these gentlemen *seat* was generally pronounced *sate*, and

that Lord Chesterfield's pronunciation of *great* was no innovation, but merely a perpetuation of the old sound, while Sir Charles Young's *greet* was a new fashion, which failed of that general and lasting adoption that prevailed as to a similar change in the pronunciation of *seat*. The facts of the case were that both these men spoke their language with the sounds which they liked to give it, or which they adopted unconsciously from those around them, and that they would have so spoken it whether it had been written or not;[1] that the sounds of the words that expressed respectively largeness and a place upon which to sit were in process of change, the change prevailing in regard to one, but failing in regard to the other; while the written characters which expressed those things remained the same as they had been for generations, unmodified by any change in the sounds which expressed those things in speech.

A like change took place in some words and failed to take place in others in the pronunciation, so to speak, of *gh*. We write *laughter*, and speak *lahfter*; we write *daughter*, and speak *dawter*. But the words were once pronounced alike; and the sound corresponding to *gh* was at first guttural in both. Many examples in point might be produced.

The fact that the *gh* both in *laughter* and in *daughter* once represented a guttural sound, of which there still lingers a remnant in the pronunciation of *raught* by some persons, only still further illustrates the perpetuation of the visible sign, unmodified by any change in the sound which it once represented, or by that of which in contemporary speech it is pro-

[1] I pass over here the influence of written language on spoken,—indirect, indeterminable, but appreciable

vocative. And if it be true, as that profound student of phonology, Mr. Alexander Ellis, has said, that changes in pronunciation are not gradual, but sudden (of which, conscious although I am of the deference due from me to his decisions, I am not quite convinced), this still further illustrates both the absence of such principles of pronunciation as Walker thought that he had laid down, and the error of the assumption that the written signs of language (that is, letters) have, so to speak, certain phonological rights and powers, and that they "ought" to be pronounced thus and so. To claim principles for that which changes suddenly and with no other reason than preference, and to insist upon rights and powers which can be taken away at a breath and upon caprice, is to disregard the plain meaning of the words we use. The truth is that there is nothing more subject to the absolute, irresponsible will of man, nothing more the servant of his will, his necessity, or his whim, than the sound with which he utters his words. The attempt to control it by the tyranny of visible signs has failed, and, although they do somewhat modify that utterance, must fail always.

If we cannot conform speech to writing, shall we herefore conform writing to speech?

That writing should conform to speech is the original and the normal relation of the two forms of language. If letters were to be invented to-day, we should have a sign for every sound, we should limit each sign to the expression of one sound, and we should thus spell our written words exactly as they are spoken.

We should do it for just one day; and the we

would be just those few persons, and no more, who would be able to agree upon the number and the nature of the sounds in the language, and upon the signs by which they should be represented.

This conclusion is not favorable to a reform in English orthography, — a reform to which the majority of the eminent philologists of both the English-speaking countries have given their adhesion. With all this preponderance of learning and ability on one side, I shall venture to present on the other some views which may be worthy of consideration by my readers.

The sudden and deliberate re-forming of English spelling seems to me to be open to three objections: it is unnecessary; it is undesirable; it is impossible. These objections, as I have previously said, have nothing to do with what is known as the conservative view of this question. If English spelling be, as it has been called, chaotic, I at least, for one, have no sympathy with the gentleman whose voice was heard, on a certain occasion, coming out of the darkness that was upon the face of the deep, crying, "*Mon Dieu! conservons le chaos!*" If a radical reform in the spelling of the English language is necessary, desirable, and possible, let us have it by all means, and with what speed we may. But they who propose such a tremendous literary uprooting of that which is the gradual growth of centuries, and which in fact is the visible body of English literature, have upon their hands, as the first part of their task, to show the world its necessity, or at least its desirability, and some reason for believing it possible.

That it is not necessary seems manifest, for the reason that the present system, or rather fashion, — for that which has neither law nor consistency cannot

called a system, — is perfectly practicable, and is daily used with unconscious facility and a reasonable approach to accuracy by millions of English-speaking people. If the present English orthography had been found to be a hindrance to the production of a good literature, or a hindrance to its appreciation, or a hindrance to the communication of thoughts and facts and wishes by writing, there would be some semblance of a reasonable plea for the necessity of such a reform. But English orthography, as it has existed for nearly three centuries, modified slightly from generation to generation by the people who have used it, is the outward form of a literature inferior to that of no other people, and superior to that of most others in quantity no less than in quality; and as to letter-writing, there are many of us, I am sure, who would much more gladly hear of some means of diminishing than of any contrivance for increasing its facility and its frequency.

As to the difficulties of English spelling, they do not appear in any form which entitles them to much consideration. Reiterating what I have said before, I declare that after a somewhat close observation in this respect for no little time past I have no hesitation in saying that these difficulties are very much exaggerated. I receive, and for some years have received daily, many letters written by representatives of all sorts and conditions of men; and I can safely say that an error in spelling is the very rarest that I meet with. Indeed, I might almost say that an error of this kind never occurs in any manuscript that comes under my observation. Mistakes of all other sorts are common, chiefly in the construction of sentences; those in the meaning of words are only less frequent,

but in general the spelling may be said to be always correct. A change in spelling seems to be necessary to give neither writers nor readers a complete and easy command of the English language, spoken or written.

What is not necessary may, however, be desirable. The desirability of a reform of English spelling is urged on three grounds: it would save much time now lost in writing silent letters, and much money now lost in printing them; it would make pronunciation certain; it would diminish very greatly the time spent in learning to write the language.

An appeal to the pocket is always an effective one, and is particularly so in these days of political economy's dismal rule. When, therefore, we are told that "bad spelling costs the country $15,000,000 a year," and that the cost of printing silent letters "is to be counted by millions for each generation," it has a very formidable sound, and it seems as if there must be a committee appointed of correspondingly formidable functions, the results of whose labors shall take form in a resolution that henceforth the English language shall be spelled in a more economical manner. For doubtless nothing is beyond the reach of resolutions, not even the formation of a written language; and as it was once declared by a very great political economist that the three-hooped pot should have ten hoops, so now it shall be proclaimed, on the contrary, that the six-lettered word shall have two letters, and that *excess* shall hereafter be written *xs*.

I shall doubtless be accused of treating a serious subject with levity; and I confess that I cannot be very grave over these assertions as to the immense sums that bad spelling and silent letters cost yearly

It is because I have considered the subject seriously that I am disposed to laugh at the charge of $15,000,000 a year to "unscientific" spelling. No proofs of such an expenditure on that account are produced; and therefore I can only say that I am very sure that the assertion is wildly extravagant, or that it must mean something very different from the plain purport of its words and figures. But suppose it to be true; and suppose that those other millions, untold, which the printing of silent letters costs amount to another fifteen. That would make the cost of the present style of spelling just $30,000,000 yearly. Now, even if all this were saved by the simple and easy means of a thorough reformation of the spelling of the English language, there would not be enough of it to give one dollar a year each to the inhabitants of the United States alone. The benefit ought surely to be very great indeed which disturbs the literature of a whole race and deranges its means of daily communication without saving a dollar each for only one branch of that race in a year.

It might be shown, on the contrary, and I think that I shall show, that the cost of the reform would be very much more than fifteen millions of dollars yearly for a very considerable time. For in the first place all the books, or at least all the valuable books, that have been printed for the last three hundred years must needs be reprinted, or to the next generation they would be as unreadable as if they were written in Anglo-Saxon, or at least as if they were put into the Old English of that first of our phonographers, the author of the "Ormulum," who did his work six hundred years ago.[1] This would cost very

[1] See Chapter X.

many millions of dollars. Then in the course of a single generation the stock of English books now existing all over the world in private and in public libraries would become worthless, except a very few to preserve as curiosities, and for consultation by scholars, involving a loss of many more millions of dollars. All the stereotype plates now in the hands of publishers would become only so much metal to be melted down; and this would involve the loss of many millions more. Imagine besides the upturning that such a reform would cause in the printing-offices of the whole English-speaking people; the sinking of capital already invested; the necessary new expenses involved; and the relearning of their trade by the printers, whose art is the growth of centuries! I think that the economical argument in favor of a change in English spelling other than that which has been going on gradually from the time of Chaucer and Wycliffe, those fathers of English literature, may be dismissed without further consideration. To use a common and very expressive phrase, such a change would cost very much more than it would come to.

A reform in our spelling might nevertheless be desirable, notwithstanding the ruinous expense that it would involve. Of the reasons for which the reform is asked, the one most strongly urged is the time that it takes to learn to spell English correctly according to the prevailing and long-established fashion. This time is said to be five years. I very much doubt the truth of this assertion, if it is taken as meaning what it seems and is apparently intended to mean. If it means that an adult English-speaking person of average intelligence cannot learn to spell his mother tongue so as to communicate his thoughts correctly

by writing in less than five years of constant study, it is so absurdly untrue that it need not be regarded. Such a person can learn to spell a foreign language, French, for instance, well enough for all practical purposes, in the course of a year's application; and French spelling is quite as difficult as English is. Even of French the spelling comes much more easily than the grammar, the construction, the idioms, the forms of thought; much more easily than the pronunciation, and above all the inflections of voice necessary to really good French speaking. Think of the genders and the verbs! and think of the exceptions! Many an English student of French, many a French student of English, can spell any word in his acquired vocabulary of either of those languages, who could not write half a page or speak five minutes without flagrant violation of grammar and of idiom.

This, however, is probably not the meaning of the assertion in question. What is meant is that five years of a child's life pass from the time when he begins to learn to spell until he can be said to spell well. This is true enough, probably, in the majority of instances; and some do not learn to spell well in ten years; a few, never. But as I have remarked before, neither do they all learn other things well in the same time, — proper pronunciation, legible writing, the simple rules of arithmetic, geography, history even in outline, and so forth. With what reason is it expected that spelling should be learned more quickly than these? If a child learns to spell tolerably between the ages of five and ten years, he does well. For during that time he gives but about an hour a day to this task for five days of the week; and meantime he is learning other things; and his very

spelling comes to him quite as much by unconscious observation of what he reads as by direct study. Moreover, at this period his attention is largely given, or should be so given, to those things which build up in him a sound and healthy physical and moral nature. To say that even a child spends five years in learning to spell conveys a very misleading notion of the real facts of the case. And if a child between the years of five and ten, in addition to all the rest that he should and generally does learn in that time, learns to spell tolerably well, he makes as good a use of his study-time in those childish years as could be asked for him.

The only other reason of seeming importance for a reform in English spelling is that we should thereby know more certainly how words should be, or how they are, pronounced. It is insisted that if each letter represented only one sound we should be rid of a world of uncertainty and ambiguity in language. "Men are asking," Dr. Trumbull tells us, "whether there is not, after all, as much absurdity in representing half a dozen different and dissimilar sounds by one and the same combination of letters — the termination *ough*, for instance — as in the wildest eccentricities of phonography." That unhappy little termination *ough*, which corresponds to other sounds than *f* in only ten words in the language, — only ten,[1] — how has it served foreigners for a jest, and been worked over by phonetic reformers for an argument! But this reason for a reform of spelling toward phonography seems at once to reverse the relations of

[1] Bough, dough, hiccough, hough, slough, though, plough, furlough through, borough; and of these one, hiccough, has properly the *f* sound hiccuf.

spoken and written language. For, apart from the consideration that speech, and not writing, is language, pronunciation is, for many centuries has been, and — may we not therefore safely assume? — always will be independent of spelling.

That this is true will, I think, appear from what I shall hereafter present in detail upon this part of my subject; but it may be briefly illustrated here. Indeed, it has been illustrated in what is said in the foregoing pages as to the pronunciation of *great*. The word *either* is another example in point. What we call the Irish pronunciation of it is *ayther;* the general English pronunciation is *eether;* but many English people of the best education and social culture pronounce it *i-ther*. The Irish pronunciation is the oldest and the most analogically correct. There is no doubt that Shakespeare and Milton and Bunyan and Dryden and Addison and Pope said *ayther*. Dr. Johnson did, if we may trust the anecdote told of him, that when asked whether he said *eether* or *i-ther*, he answered, "Nayther." The story at least shows us when *i-ther* was coming in. But with all these marked variations in the spoken word, the written word remained just the same; just as Chesterfield and Young both wrote *great*, while one spoke *grate* and the other *greet*.

The great difficulty, however, in establishing conformity of sign to sound is, in my judgment, the uncertainty that always must exist as to sound itself. Most well-educated and well-bred people seem to speak so nearly alike that this difficulty may appear chimerical to those who have given no attention to this subject. Take an example furnished by Mr. Ellis himself. In his great work on English pronun-

ciation (page 106), referring to a discussion between himself and Mr. Bell, the author of "Visible Speech," he says, "My own pronunciation of *man* he [Mr. Bell] finds frequently the same as his pronunciation of *men*; so that to him I pronounce *men man* (m-E-n, m-E-n)." Here were two distinguished phonologists brought face to face, and they not only disagreed as to the pronunciation of so simple a word as *man*, but the actual sounds that they gave it were different each to the ear of the other. And what is gained by printing either E or A? If men cannot agree upon the sound of *e* or *a*, how are they helped by using E or A? Again, in one of the Pitman phonographic tracts (edited by Mr. Ellis, I believe, or, if not by him, by Pitman himself) I find these pronunciations phonographically indicated: *jenurully* (generally), *triumphunt*, *spokun*, *troubul*, *evul*, *ignorunce*, *peopul*. Now it need hardly be said that these words are not thus pronounced by good speakers, who (giving no thought to their speech) say *gĕnĕrally*, *triumphănt*, *spo-kn*, *troubl*, *e-vil*, *ig-no-rans*, *peepl*. Such illustrations of this difficulty might be multiplied a hundred fold; and they will receive some attention from me hereafter.

Then there is another point to be considered. We have such words as *wright*, *write*, *right*, and *rite*. The spoken words have exactly the same sound; they are vocally the same word. Is it desirable that the difference between them which is preserved in spelling should be altogether destroyed? The etymological argument to the contrary may be worth something, but not much. That historical spelling does aid etymological research seems to be manifest; but philologists do not need it; the etymological view of

the question is really of little importance on either side. But the distinction which spelling makes for us silently in our minds between words of exactly the same sound seems valuable enough not to be thrown away. When Hamlet tells us that certain reflections upon mortality "must give us pause," we may be thankful that phonographic uniformity in spelling does not yet thrust upon us the doggish notion of giving us paws.

But suppose it settled that for economical and other reasons a thorough reformation of English spelling is necessary and desirable, how is it to be brought about? Suppose the new system elaborated to perfection, how and when would its adoption be secured? Books and letters are written not to conform to the views of phonologists and philologists, but that they may be read, and read immediately. To be read books must be printed and letters written in the spelling which their intended readers have learned. If their spelling differs much from that to which the intended readers are accustomed (and unless the difference is great there will be no real reform; no other change than that which has been gradually going on for centuries), they might as well be written in another language. It is not a question of conservatism, of shrinking from novelty, of laziness, or, as it is sometimes said, of "pig-headedness;" it is simply the practical one of whether a man shall write to be understood, or to be not understood; of whether a publisher shall print his books in the language of his customers, or in another, — a better, it might be, but still another. Here seems to be an insuperable difficulty in the way of any great change, and particularly of any systematic change in English spelling, or

in fact in the spelling of any language. The purpose of language is to communicate facts and thoughts, and communication implies, in terms as well as in fact, the use of that which is common to the two parties concerned. Phonologists may elaborate a system of spelling which shall be a marvel of symmetry and precision; and they may use it among themselves, as any little association of men may use any other cipher. But whoever would address English-speaking folk must write English as English-speaking folk write it; and the mass of any people, ninety-nine in a hundred of them, or rather nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand, are, and must ever be, those who have no time for the acquirement of new habits of speech, and of spelling above all other things. They *must* use the words and the letters of their language as they have been brought up to use them. This consideration alone seems to be conclusive against the possible introduction of a new system of orthography; and it is safe to assume that the spelling of the immediate future will differ no more from that of the present than that of the present does from that of the immediate past. A reformation of modern orthography, to be at all effectual, must needs be, like the reformation of moral character, regeneration.

CHAPTER XII.

MULLER AND PHONETIC SPELLING. PITMAN'S ALPHABET. ELLIS'S "PALÆOTYPE."

PROFESSOR MAX MÜLLER, in a paper on "Spelling" in the "Fortnightly Review," sets forth views on the subject than which none could be more radical, and which, if put in act and force, would not so much reform our present spelling as uproot it, overturn it, and sweep it away. His argument, like all his writings, commands admiration by its ability, its candor, and its common-sense. The very extremity of the change which he favors is a claim upon the respect even of those who cannot agree with him; for it shows the sincerity of the man and the logical clearness of his mind. It shows that he sees the truth, that if any considerable change is to be made in the spelling of English, consistency, which is the very object sought to be attained, requires so great a change that the newly written language will be to all intents and purposes a new language to the eye. Indeed, he says, "If we compare English as spoken with English as written, they seem almost like two different languages, — as different as Latin is from Italian."

I am one of those who cannot see this great difference, or a much greater difference, if difference it must be called, than always must exist between a written and a spoken language which has a great literature, the product of centuries. But this I see, and

I think that all others, Professor Müller included, must see: that if written and spoken English differ almost as much as Latin and Italian, a change which should effect conformity between them would make the new written language differ as much from the old — that is, the present — as Italian does from Latin. The logic of this conclusion is inevitable.

Now the question is whether such and so great a change is desirable, whether it would be tolerated by the English-speaking peoples, and whether, if desirable and tolerable, it would be possible. Seeing as clearly as this great philologist does the incongruities between written English and spoken English, I have ventured, with full consciousness of my temerity in so doing, to say that I do not regard such a change as desirable, and that I believe it to be neither tolerable nor possible. Professor Müller speaks avowedly for philologists and scholars; I speak only in the interests of men of average intelligence and some acquaintance with their mother tongue and its literature, of whose cause I presume to offer myself as an advocate.

Professor Müller begins by declaring that the necessity for a thorough reform of English spelling "is no longer a matter for argument;" whereupon he immediately sets out upon an argument in its favor which covers twenty-four large, closely printed octavo pages. This might be regarded as somewhat inconsistent. But what if it be? That does not in the least diminish the value of what he says, or injuriously affect his position. For in spite of the shallow line of which so many are eager to discover the origin, and which so many more are fond of quoting, consistency is not a jewel; that is, it is not so absolutely and of itself

If one argument is destructive of another which is used by the same person, that is an inconsistency which is of moment. But the mere fact that a man's action at one time is inconsistent with either his action or his words at another neither impeaches the honesty of his action nor impairs the value of his opinion. Professor Müller adds to his former remark one that seems to me full of wisdom. It is that his experience and observation of life has convinced him that "nothing vexes people so much, and hardens them in their unbelief and in their resistance to reforms, as undeniable facts and unanswerable arguments," and that "reforms are carried by time." But his further development of the same notion — that "what generally prevails in the end are not logical deductions, but some haphazard and frequently irrational motives" — seems hardly so sound. It is true that logical deductions rarely effect reforms; but that by which they are effected is not hap-hazard, irrational motives, but a change in the moral tone and in the general intellectual perceptions and actions of mankind. The world suddenly wakes up and sees that what was true, or was thought true, yesterday, is not true to-day; that what was tolerable a few years ago is not to be tolerated now. Reforms are made possible by the moral and intellectual development of the race. Thus, for example, the belief in witchcraft and in possession by evil spirits suddenly disappeared. The passages in the Bible which were supposed to make a belief in witches and in possession a part of an orthodox religious creed remained unchanged; but men's minds had changed, and, notwithstanding the passages which a few years before they had accepted as authoritative, they began to reject the notion of

witchcraft as ridiculous, and to regard the hanging and drowning of supposed witches as not only cruel, but absurd.

Such a change as this, however, either in its suddenness or its independence of reason or authority, is not to be looked for in regard to the question whether we shall discard the present method of writing English, which is the gradual, unconscious growth of almost a thousand years, and adopt a new one, made for us out of hand on the spot, and particularly adapted to the speech of our own day. For this is a question not of right and wrong; nor is it a philosophical question, or one in any way of morals, or of belief, or of conduct. It does not concern man's relations to man individually, socially, or politically, or his intellectual development, or the present or the future condition of what he calls his soul, which are the points upon which reforms are carried by time. It is a question simply of convenience in the use of a means or instrument, upon which he depends daily for the communication of facts, thoughts, and needs. Is it easier and better for him to take the written language as he learned it, almost unconsciously, in his youth, and in a form which enables him to command all its literature for at least three hundred years back, or to have a brand new alphabet, and, after he has learned it, to write down, to the best of his ability, not words, as we now understand the term, but the sounds that he utters, without regard to any other relation of speech and writing whatever? Is it, for example, easier and better for all of us who are more than five years old to spell thus: years, assault, physiologists, reason, always, nations, weights, exceptions, requires, fixed laws, generations; or thus

yirz, asωlts, fiziolojists, rizun, ωlwεz, nεſunz, wεts, ekzerſunz, rikquirz, fikst lωz, jenerεſunz? These words (in their latter form) I have taken almost at hap-hazard from a specimen which Professor Müller gives of phonetic printing, according to the Pitman system, the one which he advocates.[1]

Professor Müller asks any intelligent and unprejudiced reader whether he could not read and write English according to Pitman's system, after a few days' practice, with perfect ease. It may be at once admitted that such a person with endeavor in good faith could do so. Indeed, a man with respectable powers of acquirement could in half an hour make very considerable progress toward mastering English written in this way, and with a few weeks' daily practice could read it, and possibly even write it, with correctness and ease. A man who could not do that might better give up learning anything, except by process of gradual absorption. But this is not the point at issue. So a man might learn with equal ease, and in no longer time, to write down the sounds of English words in German text or in Greek letters. The question rather is whether the whole change involved in this so-called phonetic reform is, all things considered, rational, desirable, feasible; and notwithstanding Professor Müller's declaration and all that has been written upon the subject besides, this does seem to me to be eminently a matter for argument.

To see what the whole change would be, it is nec-

[1] The specimen covers more than half an octavo page; but I could not quote from it a single sentence, however brief, for the lack of other and strange letters. The use of the Greek omega and epsilon, and the old long *s* enables me to show very nearly the characters used for the vowel sounds of *all* and of *pay*, and for the mixed consonantal sound (*sh*) in the middle of *nation*.

essary first to examine Pitman's phonetic alph[illegible] and compare it with our own, and [illegible] willingly admit that this alphabet is not only [illegible] best that has been contrived, but that I cannot [illegible] it room for material improvement. It is given [illegible] in Professor Müller's paper.

THE PHONETIC ALPHABET.

[The phonetic letters in the first and second [illegible]umns are pronounced like the italic letters in [illegible] third column.]

	CONSONANTS.			*Liquids.*
	Mutes.		L	l
P	p	rope	R	r
B	b	robe		*Coalescents.*
T	t	fate	W	w
D	d	fade	Y	y
C	ç	etch		*Aspirate.*
J	j	edge	H	h
K	k	leak		
G	g	league		
	Continuants.			VOWELS.
F	f	safe	A	a
V	v	save	Ə	ə
Ɵ	ɵ	wreath	E	e
Ð	ð	wreathe	Ɛ	ɛ
S	s	hiss	I	i
Z	z	his	Ɩ	ɩ
Ʃ	ʃ	vicious	O	o
Ʒ	ʒ	vision	Ɔ	ɔ
	Nasals.		Ɣ	ɣ
M	m	seem	Ɔ	ɔ
N	n	seen	U	u
Ŋ	ŋ	sing	Ɯ	ɯ

DIPHTHONGS:	ɵ ɩ,	Ʉ ɥ,	OU,
as heard in	by	new,	now,

On looking at this alphabet the reader wh[illegible] been alarmed at the words phonetic and ph[illegible]

raphy may be surprised at the few changes in the force of letters which it involves. Of the consonants, *p*, *b*, *d*, *t*, *j*, *k*, *g*, *f*, *v*, *s*, *z*, *m*, *n*, *l*, and *r*, fifteen in all, are retained with their long-recognized values. *W*, *y*, and *h* appear also with their values unchanged. But consonants are the most stable elements of speech, both in the mouth and upon the pen. It is the vowel, which is the breath of life to language, that varies in sound from generation to generation, and not infrequently within a generation; and it is in the endeavor to define and fix the vowel sounds that all inventors of phonetic signs make the greatest changes, and have their ingenuity most severely tested. Mr. Pitman's alphabet is not an exception to the general rule in this respect. We have indeed our old friends *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*; but the sign "a" is restricted to the representation of one sound, and that is neither the English name sound of *a* (*ay*) nor the primal sound for which it originally stood (*ah*), but a small, mean, intermediate sound, — that in *am*, *hat*, and *pat*. "E" is likewise assigned and restricted to the obscure sound in *ell*; while for the distinctive English sound of *e* (*ee*), as in *eel*, we have an altogether new sign, as we have one almost new, a kind of *e*, to express our English name sound of *a*. So "o" is deprived of its birthright, which is involved in its very name (*oh*), and put off with the miserable semblance of it that there is in the vowel sound of *on*, which is but *ah* compressed until the life is squeezed out of it; while for the real "o" we have ɔ, an infuriated Q with its tail in the air, in a rage at being turned in its proper form clean out of the alphabet. To be sure, it has no very independent place there, leaning, as it does, always upon u.

But still an alphabet which admits a sign for

such compounds as the consonantal sounds in *etch*, in *wreathe*, in *vicious*, and in *vision* might have let poor *q* alone, characteristically leading as he does so many (although comparatively few) words which mark the Latin element in our language. And we may be sure that most intelligent and fair-minded persons, with a moderate sense of the ridiculous, would gladly be saved from spelling *queen kwin*, *quack kwak*, *quart kwart*, *queer kwir*, and *quote kwot*, to which we should be reduced by the abolition of *q* and the adoption of the other phonetic changes proposed by Mr. Pitman and advocated by Professor Müller.

The change involved in the adoption of the Pitman phonetic alphabet, or any other, is not so much in the value of individual letters as in the entire structure of written English. Thus, for example, the combination *tch* is stricken out, and for *catch* we have *kaȝ*, and, as *ng* also goes, for *watching waȝiŋ*. *J* does not lose its power, but the combination *dg*, for which it is substituted, disappears, and for *edge* we have *ej*, and for *knowledge nolej* ; our youthful spoon victuals become *porij*, a *hedge* a *hej*, and a *bridge* a *brij*. And so, with the disappearance of *g* with its soft sound in favor of *j*, and the disuse of *a* with its name sound (for it is the sound which determines the sign in all cases), we shall find our *rage rɛj*, our *page pɛj*, our *stage stɛj*, and so forth. The combinations *ci*, *si*, and *ti* will also disappear, and not only will words like *vicious* and *vision* be written *viʃus* and *viȝun* ; but to relieve the contestants at spelling bees of doubts as to *sh* and *ti*, *gracious* and *damnation* will be spelled grɛʃus and damnɛʃun.

A great and a very important dislocation of our written speech would be effected by the making of

graphy conform to every change produced in sound the addition of prefixes and suffixes, by inflection, by the change of accent. Thus *clean* would be written *klin*, but *cleanly* not *klinli*, but *klenli*; for nature we should have *negur*, but for *natural nagurul*; for create *kriet*, but for *creature krigur*; *produce* as a verb would be *prodys*, but as a noun *prodys*. I have thus but slightly indicated, or rather merely hinted at, the sort of changes which would be effected by the introduction of a phonetic alphabet; being limited not only by the space which I can give to this part of my subject, but by the lack of the phonetic type which a fuller illustration of this point would require.

Another effect of the adoption of a phonetic alphabet and system of spelling would appear in a diminished capacity of the new generation to enjoy the literature of the past unless it were reprinted (having been previously all rewritten) in the new English. I have said that the ability to read English as it is at present written gives a command of the literature of our language for three hundred years back. This is a very moderate limit. The general misconception upon this point by those who are unacquainted with English literature as it appears in books of past centuries is very great. We have to get past the Elizabethan period before the slightest difficulty appears. In illustration of this position I quote the following stanza, the first of George Gascoigne's "Goodmorrow," as it was printed just five years more than three centuries ago, in 1575, the book having been the first that came to my hand, and the poem the one to which the book opened of itself: —

"You that haue spent the silent night
In sleepe and quiet rest,
And ioye to see the cheerfull lyght
That riseth in the East:
Now cleare your voyce, now chere your hart,
Come helpe me nowe to sing.
Each willing wyght come beare a part
To prayse the heauenly King."

This is a fair representation of our language as it was written and printed three hundred years ago, before Spenser had published a line, and while Shakespeare and Bacon were at grammar school. I shall not insult the intelligence of any mature reader by asking if such a person could not read such verses and enjoy them without hindrance from their spelling, or even without a thought about it; but I will ask if any child old enough to read the "Arabian Nights" or "Robinson Crusoe" could not read those verses just as easily as he could read a paragraph in to-day's newspaper. The child might be struck and amused by three or four superfluous *e*'s, by the use of *u* for *v*, and of *y* four times where modern orthography requires *i*; but these slight variations from the modern style of spelling would be no hindrance to his enjoyment, — rather from their quaintness a help and a stimulus. Suppose, however, that the child or the man had been brought up on the phonetic alphabet, and had seen the words which compose those lines always written thus: —

Yq đat hav spent đe sịlent nịt
In slip and kwịet rest,
And joi tɯ si đi çirful lịt
Đat i zeɟ in đi Ist:
Now klir yqr vois, now çir yqr hɯrt,
Kɯm help mi now tɯ siŋ:
Iç williŋ wịt kɯm ber o pɯrt
Tɯ prez đe heven i Kiŋ;

and if he had learned (as he would have learned)

that those sounds could be indicated only by those letters, and that those letters could have those sounds and no others, what would be his capacity for reading Gascoigne's verses, or those of any other English poet from the pre-Elizabethan period to the present? The fact that some of the letters which I have used are mere make-shifts, only as nearly as possible like Pitman's phonetic letters as the types at my command will allow, is of no moment. For the purposes of illustration and argument one strange arbitrary sign is as good as another. It should be remarked, however, that this stanza of Gascoigne's does not present this part of the case in so strong a light as might be thrown upon it, because it has an unusual number of words in which the phonetic alphabet makes no change.

Let us now consider the converse of this view. Certain lines spoken by Hamlet after the player leaves him, in the last scene of the second act of the tragedy, have already (Chapter V., page 84) been presented with the pronunciation of Shakespeare's day represented in our orthography. For the convenience of the reader the passage is here repeated: —

> "*Ees eet* not mons*troos thot thees* player *hare*,
> *Boot een a ferc-sy-on, een a dhrame* of *pass-y-on*,
> *Coold* force *hees sowl* so to *hees* own *consate*,
> *Thot* from her working all *hees veesage* warm'd;
> *Tares een hees ayes; deesth-action een* 's aspect,
> A broken voice, and *hees* whole *foonction shooting*
> *Weet* forms to *hees consate*; and all for *noting*."

Assuming this pronunciation, then, as Shakespeare's (from which even according to Mr. Ellis's view it differs but slightly), what would be the effect of this and other passages upon modern readers if they had been written in a phonetic alphabet the

powers of which had remained without change, while pronunciation had changed, as it must (and as Professor Max Müller admits that it would) have done. Shakespeare's poetry and all the poetry of the past would, to say the least, have lost much of its charm for us. It would be in a certain sense ridiculous. We could not read it without laughing at its antiquated and what would seem to us its uncouth sound; whereas, with its fixed orthography, its beauty remains fixed likewise. The printed words are but visible signs which call up their vocal counterparts, according to our own mode of vocalizing them. The sign (the written word) remains the same, or nearly the same, for all generations, and each generation gives to the sign the sound of the word according to the fashion of its own period. And this is one great value of a fixed or very slowly changing system of spelling. It does not conform to the floating fashions of pronunciation; and it thus preserves the form of literature which would otherwise be destroyed in the lapse and ruin of time.

It is thus with the literature of Greece and of Rome. Professor Müller, with his usual candor, confesses that, notwithstanding all the efforts that have been made by philologists and phonologists, "we shall never be able to speak with anything like real scientific accuracy of the pronunciation of ancient languages" (and I may be pardoned for calling to mind that I published the same opinion years ago); but we can nevertheless enjoy their literature, including their poetry; and it is a question whether we do not enjoy it the more because we are freed from the necessity of strict conformity to their pronunciation. In English, accent has remained nearly the

same for centuries, the force of consonants almost exactly the same; and the consequence is that, notwithstanding the variation in the ephemeral sound of the vowels, the rhythm of poetry and even of prose remains unchanged; and it is certainly protected from the degrading effect which would have been caused by the phonetic spelling and printing of antiquated speech. The result of a fixed orthography is an almost perennial preservation of the beauties of literature.

Professor Müller candidly recognizes the one great difficulty in the way of the adoption of a phonetic system of spelling, — the uncertainty as to the sounds which are to be phonetically recorded. Pronunciation differs so much, even among educated speakers, as to render unattainable that uniformity and absoluteness in phonetic writing without which it is worthless for general and literary purposes, however valuable it might be to philologists as a record of what is or has been, with which facts only philology concerns itself. He says that he could mention the names of three English bishops, "one of whom pronounced the vowel in *God* like *gaud*, another like *rod*, a third like *gad*." The last pronunciation, he says, "would probably be condemned by everybody." True; and yet it was once the elegant pronunciation. A remnant of it, a survivor, appears in the oath, "'fore gad," which is in the mouths of half the fine fellows in the old comedies. "But the other two pronunciations," he adds, "would remain sanctioned by the highest authority, and therefore retained in phonetic writing." But what is that phonetic writing worth which gives us *god* and *gaud* for the same word?

Another part of this difficulty is the variableness

in the perceptions of sound, even among professed phonologists. They do not agree as to the speech of people generally; and not only so, they differ as to each other's speech, and are even unable to record their own with satisfactory accuracy. Mr. Ellis gives in phonetic type the parable of the Prodigal Son as it is written by another distinguished phonologist, and as he himself would read it aloud. The difference is so great that it seems in some passages to be in different languages, — languages as different as Italian and Spanish.

I reproduce here one verse of the parable (the second) as Mr. Ellis gives it in his palæotype, an elaborate phonographic alphabet which he has invented to represent accurately all known vocal sounds. The first example was written out by Mr. Bell; the second by Mr. Ellis himself.

MELVILLE BELL.

Ænd not mɛni deiz aah·ftɐr dhy ɹɛ·qgɐɹ sɛn gɐ·dhɐɹd ʌʌl tugɛ·dhɐɹ ahnd tuk ɐhiz dzhɐɹni i·hntɐ ah faɹ kɐ·ntri.

ALEXANDER J. ELLIS.

Ɔnd-nə·t me·ni deez aa.ftɐ dha-ɹə·qgɐ sen gæ·dhɐd ʌʌl tuge·dha ɐn-tuk-iz dzləə·ni in-tu-ɐ-faa kə·ntri.

It will be seen that even in this one verse only three words, *all*, *took*, and *to*, are represented in both versions as having the same sounds. It will also be observed by those who look closely that, according to his own record of his own speech, the former president of the British Philological Society does not sound the letter *r* at the end of words like *fat*

younger, and *together*, but pronounces them *fathă*, *youngă*, and *to-gethă*. Like noteworthy characteristics of his speech will be found in one of the following additional examples of the difference of pronunciation between gentlemen who are themselves eminent phonologists; they are the last with which I shall afflict my long-suffering reader. The phrase to be expressed (for I forbear giving a whole sentence) is the following:—

"The written and printed representation of the sounds of language."

This is given in the Ellis palæotype as its sounds impress themselves upon the hearing of Mr. Ellis, of Professor Haldeman, of Mr. Sweet, and of Mr. Smart.[1]

MR. ALEXANDER J. ELLIS.

Dhɐ-ri-t'n ɐn-pri-ntyd re:prizentee·shɐn ɐ-d-hɐ-ɐeu·nz ɐv-læqwydzhsh.

PROFESSOR S. S. HALDEMAN.

Dha ⌊ritn ynd p⌊rintyd ⌊repɹizentee·shyn yv dhə ɹa·wndz yv læqgwidzh.

MR. H. SWEET.

Dh'-ri·tn-'n-pri-·nted-rɛ:pr'z'ntey·sh'n-'v-dh' sæɒo·-ndz-'v-læ-·qqgwedzh.

MR. B. H. SMART.

Dhə rit·n ənd print·ed rep:rizentee⌊ishən əv dhə ɜnaundz əv læq·gwedzh.

[1] Mr. Henry Sweet, one of the foremost living Anglo-Saxon scholars, is the author of the *History of English Sounds*, and was in 1876 president of the London Philological Society. Mr Smart I have already spoken of; and Professor Haldeman, of the University of Pennsylvania, needs no introduction to readers who are at all interested in linguistic studies.

Here again we find that hardly two words in ten are heard alike and expressed alike by four of the most eminent English orthoépists and phonologists. Even *the* in its short, unemphatic utterance is expressed by three of them in three different ways. Behold, too, their labor in *representation* and their travail in bringing forth *language*, and see the uncertain look of both these words. See too that Mr. Ellis, according to his own showing, does not say *and printed*, but *n printid*, nor *of the sounds*, but *o' th' souns*.

It seems to me that the impossibility of forming a phonetic system of spelling needs no further or clearer illustration than this. For if even Ellis and Haldeman and Smart cannot agree as to what are the sounds of words and what are the characters proper to express them, when they have a system of phonotype of minute exactness made to their hands, what is there to be reasonably hoped for in this direction?

Professor Müller shows at some length that the etymological significance of our present spelling is not of sufficient importance to be allowed to stand in the way of a change which would give us ease and certainty in the use of signs to express sounds. He need not, I think, have given so much space and attention to this part of the subject. The etymology of words as indicated by their spelling is interesting; but language is made for daily use, not for etymologists and philologists, amateur or professional; and their intellectual pleasures cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the world's convenience. But when Professor Müller, like other eminent philologists, advocates phonetic spelling because of the scientific value that it would have to philologists as a phonetic

record of the sounds that words had in past generations, he fails to see, or forgets for the moment, I think, that even if we had a phonetic spelling in the literature of the past we should not know what sounds the characters were meant to indicate. And who could tell a hundred years hence what sound any vowel had in any word at this day, except by a painful process of research, examination of authorities, collation of rhymes, and the like, and then not with certainty? If in any system of spelling certain letters are omitted which appear in others, we may at once infer that those letters were silent — *on the lips of the person who did not write them.* But we can infer nothing more; for even by the brief examples given above we see that letters are silent in the speech or to the ears of Mr. Ellis which are uttered and heard by Mr. Smart, and by almost every one, except careless and slovenly speakers.

Even when great care has been taken, as by the writers of past generations upon English orthoëpy (and within the last three hundred years they have been many), it is almost impossible, I shall not say to see, but even by patient study to discover, what sounds were intended by certain combinations of letters. No part of Mr. Ellis's great work — admirable for its vast labor, its signal ability, and its candid spirit — is more instructive by way of warning, it seems to me, than his painful endeavors to show from the writings of these old orthoëpists what was the pronunciation of their day. He generally fails to convince me by that means, as he has failed to convince others, admirers, no less than I, and no more, of his ability and his learning.[1] We are to pronounce *bu/l*

[1] See for example *On Early English Pronunciation, with Especial*

like *pull*. Yes; but how was *pull* pronounced? like *full*, or like *dull?* Who can tell? — and the perplexity stretches back into remote generations. And if we are told that it is proposed to remove this difficulty forever by giving but one sound to the combination *ull*, for example, the reply that sweeps that away is, What sound will you give to *ull*, and what sound can you fix upon it? Mr. Ellis himself has declared that the pronunciation of certain combinations of letters changes suddenly, and therefore *ull*, if it had the sound that it has in *bull* to-day, might in ten years have the sound which it also to-day has in *dull*, in *cull*, and in *mull*. The inability to indicate to the mind's ear what is the sound intended to be expressed by certain signs or letters underlies the whole difficulty about phonetic writing, and would deprive it of historical value even more than of present convenience.

Here is an example in point. It is quoted by Mr. Ellis from Edward Coote's "English Schoolmaster," 4to, 1673. Robert and John are instructing us, by way of dialogue, in the niceties of English speech —

Rob. But, Goodman Taylor, our clerk, when I went to school with him, taught me to sound these vowels [in *fram, frem, frim, from*] otherwise than (methinks) you do.

Joh. How as that?

Rob. I remember he taught me these syllables thus: for *bad, bed, bid, bod, bud*, I learned to say *bade, bid, bide, bode, bude;* sounding a *bed* to ly upon as to *bid* or command, and *bid* as *bide*, long as in *abide;* *bud* of a tree as *bude*, long like *rude;* for these three vowels, *a, i, u*, are very corruptly and ignorantly taught by many unskilful teachers, which

Reference to Chaucer, in Opposition to the Views maintained by Mr A. Ellis, F. R. S. By Richard Francis Weymouth, D. Lit., M. A., Fellow University College, London.

the cause of so great ignorance of the true writing in those that want the Latin tongue.

Joh You say true; for so did my dame teach me to pronounce *a*, for *sa*, *se*, *si*, *so*, *su*, to say *sa*, *see*, *si*, *soo*, *sow*, as if she had sent me to see her *sow*, whereas *se* should be sounded like the *sea*, and *su* as to *sue* one at the law.

This passage refers merely to the pronunciation of *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*, in monosyllables, not longer ago than the time of Dryden's prime; and yet what can be learned from it? Even according to Mr. Ellis, nothing; for he says of it, "the exact meaning of which it is difficult to discover;" and he supposes that it must refer to some childish school-boy puzzle "like that in the spelling of *Habakkuk*." But I cannot think so; for the serious purpose of the writer is very apparent, and he makes it unmistakable by this foot-note: "Let the unskilful teachers take great heed of this fault, and let some good scholars hear their children pronounce these syllables." And yet, simple as the matter is, all that the writer has been able to convey to us is the fact that the vowels had in his day, or just before it, sounds different from those which they have now. I think that his meaning might perhaps be discovered by careful analysis and comparison; but none the less does the result of his phonetic effort show on its face the futility of phonography as a record of value to the philologist. It had meaning to his contemporaries, — to some of them, perhaps to many; but to us it is only a phonetic puzzle, the meaning of which we may find out if we can.

Professor Müller, like the other advocates of a phonetic system of spelling, insists strongly upon the difficulty with which our present orthography is learned

and the sufferings — one might say, from the way in which these gentlemen talk about it, the agonies — that children undergo in learning to read and write our present written English. This subject I have considered before; and I can only repeat that those great difficulties and those great agonies, *as peculiar to spelling*, I have never been able to see. I never knew them myself; nor do I remember them in any of my school-fellows. There were difficulties; but so there were difficulties in learning anything, — rather less in spelling than in others. I know of letters written by boys eight or nine years old which are quite correctly spelled; and I repeat that with an unusually wide range of observation for many years in the writing of persons who have had little education — none rightly so called — a mistake in spelling is the rarest error I have observed. We learn spelling quite as much by gradual absorption of its methods as by teaching and the iterative practice of the school-room. We learn to spell by reading, those who read much being generally correct spellers; and the result of my observation is that most intelligent persons of average education, if asked to spell a word that they had never seen or heard before, would spell it correctly. Some might fail; but what matter if they did? Is there anything so very grievous in spelling a word not according to "the dictionary"? I cannot see that there is. As for myself, if I were caught misspelling a word, I should not care one drop of this ink with which I am writing; and in saying this I am not pleading for my own errors, for I have reason to believe that I have never misspelled a word since I was old enough to be trusted with pen and ink. But many a much better and abler man

has done so; and what of it? I cannot see that this matter of spelling is worth all the fuss that is made about it.

In any case, spelling must be merely arbitrary, a matter of fashion and tacit agreement. A sound has no real relation to a sign; and we may as well have signs for words (as we do now) as signs for single sounds. And if we had such signs for single sounds they would soon, by the variableness of speech, cease to indicate them, and would stand for some other sounds. For, as Professor Müller incidentally admits in one place, this difficulty is "inherent in the very life of language;" and, as he justly says elsewhere, "writing indicates, but does not paint, sounds." In these admissions he has, it seems to me, given up the very cause for which he was doing battle.

CHAPTER XIII.

PHILOLOGISTS AS REFORMERS. MR. ELLIS'S GLOSSIC SPELLING.

We have seen (in Chapter X.) how long ago and how very early in the history of our language men curious as to spelling began to contrive modes of phonetic orthography, and how continuous such efforts have been to the present day. Now, however, there is a phonetic-spelling "movement." The slender succession of individual reformers through centuries is suddenly in one generation developed into a band of agitators, somewhat numerous, and in some instances highly distinguished, who clamor for a change. Just so a rocket rises through the darkness in a thin line of light and then bursts into a blaze of stars; but that is the end of it; the stars pass off in smoke. I feel very sure that, bright as many of the names are which now illumine it, such will be the end of spelling reform. But of the numerousness of the advocates of a change in the written form of English I had only an imperfect notion before the receipt of various printed records of their doings, which have been kindly sent me within the last year or two. There are spelling-reform associations, and verily they have "transactions," and, 'faith, they print 'em; not always, however, very intelligibly to the general eye and mind. There are writers who publish in magazines each his little project for changing at a word, and by law or by gen-

eral consent — sort of intellectual mass-meeting — the outward and visible form of a language which is the product of many centuries of well-rooted growth. There are conventions: one such was held in Philadelphia some two years and a half ago; another more recently in London. The Bulletin of the Spelling Reform Association, No. 1, which bears the ominous, and, were it not for my respect for individuals connected with it, I should say the fitting, date of April, 1877, opens with the declaration: "Never before in the history of the language has there been so much promise of a reform in our orthography as at the present time."

These facts explain to me the interest with which I have learned, somewhat to my surprise, that what I have written upon a dry subject, and it seems to me almost a trivial, is read. It is timely. I am sorry for it. People might be much more profitably employed in using, or even in studying, the language as it is, than in the attempt to change its written form; an attempt which, from the very nature of the thing to be changed, can end only in utter failure. No one who dreads the sudden and violent disturbance of the visible surface of our language and its literature need regard the phonetic-spelling movement with any apprehension of evil. It will effect no change of importance. Changes in spelling there will be, but not in virtue of the "movement;" nor will the changes be those for which the reformers are clamoring. Our alphabet and our spelling will surely remain, for some generations at least, very much what they have been for centuries.

The advocates of a destruction of the present written English language for the sake of phonetic spell-

ing, however, in presenting their case to the public insist strongly upon the fact that nearly all the eminent English philologists are favorers of a reformed spelling of the English language. To a certain extent this is true. It is certainly true that nearly all of them are very much dissatisfied with the present English spelling; but of a consent among them as to what reform shall be and how it shall be brought about, I have been able to discover no indications. Until there is such a consent, all expression of discontent and crying for reform is very much like the howling of wolves against a storm; it expresses discontent and a desire of change, but it does nothing more. A phonetic reformer,[1] who makes the most of the "movement," has nevertheless recently admitted that "it would be a dangerous error to suppose that, after all, a very great deal, comparatively speaking, has been gained."

Now, what is it that has been gained? Merely that certain experts and specialists in language — men who give themselves up not to the study of literature nor to the practice of writing or that of speaking, but to the scientific study of the history and structure of language — have declared themselves in favor of a phonetic change in English spelling. In the first place, the fact that they are experts and specialists in language is against them in this matter. Upon questions of fact in the history of language, upon the relations of languages and of words, upon the indications which language gives of the connection of peoples and of the development of civilization, the opinions of such men are to be received with def-

[1] Professor Lounsbury, in *Scribner's Magazine*, October and November 1879.

erence, and to be disputed by laymen with caution, if at all, and even with humility; but as to what it is best for us English-speaking and English-writing people to do with our mother tongue, our household words, our mean of common life from day to day, their opinions are likely to be worth much less than those of the mass of intelligent, well-educated, and thoughtful people who have not made the study of language a specialty.

Specialists and experts are always to be distrusted upon practical questions, if those questions are connected with their specialty. In particular, specialists in language come to look upon language as being chiefly and almost entirely a subject of analysis, of comparison; of historical inquiry. The facts that it enables the three living generations of men to communicate daily and hourly their thoughts and wishes to each other, and that by it they are also enabled to know and to enjoy the thoughts and to sympathize with the joys and sorrows of generations through centuries past, are comparatively little regarded by them. And it is to be remarked, in connection with this view of their case, that the principal reason given (if I mistake not) by almost every one of the eminent specialists in language who has entered the phonetic-reform movement for his contempt of the present English spelling and his desire for a phonetic reform is that any other than phonetic spelling conceals etymology, does not record the history of speech, and makes philological research difficult. That this is true, in a measure, no one who has given any considerable attention to the historical study of even his own language can for a moment doubt. But what of that? Is language made for philologists, or are

[illegible] Why [illegible] who read to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

English words; and without such knowledge of any subject, with what reason is a man expected to have any mastery of it? Mr. Ellis said, if not on this occasion, at another time, that a man on seeing a word written does not know how to pronounce it until he is told, — an opinion which seems to me quite wrong. Under the condition just mentioned, I am sure, from observation and experiment, that nine intelligent men out of ten would pronounce correctly, at sight, an English word that they had never met with before. There is no limit to the extravagance of specialists who have gone off on an agitation.

At this convention Dr. Gladstone made much of the point that differing standards prevail in different school districts, and that pupils "are plucked in one district for spelling *honor* with the *u*, and in another for spelling it without." What if they are? It only shows the pettiness of pedagoguery. What difference does it make whether a boy or a man spells *honor* or *honour?* One way is just as good as the other. Both spellings have support in etymology and in analogy. The question is merely one of fashion and of convenience. The difference is not worth a moment's thought. This sort of fussiness justly brings word-mongers into contempt.

Mr. Robert Lowe, M. P., who has joined the ranks of the reformers, sent a letter to the convention, in which he said that as he was informed that there are thirty-nine sounds in the language, and there are only twenty-four letters, he thought "that fifteen new letters should be added, so that there be a letter for every sound, and that *every one should write as he speaks.*" The result, it may be remarked in passing, would be striking and interesting, if not altogether

lovely. He added that he could get no boys t read to him "tolerably;" they "have no idea of the pro-nunciation of the language." His only remedy for this is "to teach all the thirty-nine sounds together with the letter which presents each of them." The last is amazing. It would seem that a man of Mr. Lowe's general intelligence should know that the pronunciation of a language is not learned from letters but from daily intercourse with those who speak it well, and by means of perceptions naturally fine and highly cultivated. He could find many a well-bred woman who had had very little education, and who never gave the question of the powers of letters a thought, whose pronunciation of English is unexceptionably good, and who could read to him much better than tolerably. English orthography was fixed in the days of Queen Anne, and was then to all intents and purposes just what it is now. But the Duke of Marlborough, one of the greatest generals that ever lived, an accomplished and successful diplomatist, an elegant man of society, whose English we may be sure, was as fine as was ever spoken, could not spell. And what matter? What had his spelling to do either with his ability and his accomplishments or with his English? I am informed that Eliphalet De Nott, the distinguished president of Union College, spelled so badly that his wife had to correct all his manuscripts. Unfashionable spelling may be a misdemeanor to dunces, but it is of little consequence when a clever man spells, especially if he is in the habit of employing a competent wife or a careful proof-reader.

The most striking and characteristic remark made at this convention came from the Reverend Archibald Sayce, of Oxford, an eminent philologist and Orien-

scholar, who first took the chair. He objected to English spelling that it "cultivated an unphilological habit of mind," — a criticism not less than amazing in its scope and purpose. In very deed it is true. And what could be more deplorable than an unphilological habit of mind among the millions of the English-speaking people! It is much to be feared that the habit of Mr. John Bright's mind is hopelessly unphilological. Certain it is that John Bunyan's was so. Indeed, the Bedford tinker was so depravedly unphilological that he spelled one well-known word both *slough* and *slow*. But perhaps it may be reasonably doubted whether philological habits of mind would have improved either the English or the delivery of John Bright's speeches, or the style of "The Pilgrim's Progress." Could there be better illustration than this remark of the unfitness of philological specialists to deal with such a practical question as that of a change in the written form of a language and a literature like the English!

Dr. Gladstone brought before his fellow philologists a subject upon which many of them seem to have taken leave of facts and of their own common-sense. He said that the means of effecting a change to a new system of spelling "were in the hands of the government," and thereupon Mr. Ellis proposed the third resolution: "That as no change would be effectual unless the amended spelling were accepted by school inspectors, civil service examiners, and public departments side by side with the present spelling, the assistance of the government will be required."

True, indeed, most learned and most candid of phonologists; but there is yet another body whose aid is of incalculably more importance, and without which

the assistance of the government would not be of one feather power, — the bulk of English-speaking people. It is for them that books and newspapers are printed, and not for philologists, or for phonologists, or for others, who, being neither philologists nor phonologists, take it upon themselves to agitate a spelling reform. What would induce the publishers of the leading journals in New York and in London to make the reading of newspapers difficult to the three generations — old, middle-aged, and young — whom they address daily? What would induce the hundreds of publishers of millions of English volumes yearly to lay phonetic stumbling-blocks and phonological fun-provokers along every line of every page they issued? If ninety-nine in every hundred of them should do so, they would merely ruin themselves and make the "eternal fortune" of the hundredth who did not. It is not surprising that my first correspondent, heretofore mentioned, would have "Congress finish the work" which some spelling reformers had begun; but even Professor March announces, with evident expectations of success, that "the reformers have accordingly proposed to add to the authority of the Philological Association whatever can be gained by government sanction. They petition Congress to move for a joint commission of the English-speaking peoples to report upon the amendments."[1] This is midsummer madness. In the first place, Congress has no power, no right, to interfere in any way with the question of language or of school instruction. Any law having such a purpose would be unconstitutional and void. Nor has Congress the power even to appoint such a commission as that proposed. If

[1] *Princeton Review*, January, 1880.

the State of Louisiana should choose to pass its statutes in the French language, and to have that language spoken in its courts and taught in its schools, if California should do the same as to the Spanish language, if Colorado should in like manner adopt the vernacular of the Utes, and if New York should return to the language of New Amsterdam, they would have the right to do so, and Congress has not the power, on the one hand, to say them nay, or, on the other, to appropriate a dollar of their money for the improvement of the English language, or of any other.

But if Congress had the general powers of Parliament in this matter, they both together would be as powerless as the three tailors of Tooley Street. Congress may, if it pleases, decree that all pleadings before the Supreme Court shall be in Norman French, as Parliament may decree that the royal assent to a bill, instead of being announced as *La Reine le vult*, shall be, The Queen wills it. But as to affecting the way in which one man writes for another to read, all the Congresses and Parliaments and conventions that were ever convoked would be as powerless as a boy whistling against the north wind. True, the boy's whistle has some power, and so have conventions; but as in the former case no very great change is made in the course or in the velocity of the wind, so in the latter the progress of the language would continue in its normal lines, quite unaffected by anything in the form of "whereas," "resolved," or "be it enacted." Congress and Parliament can give laws to the two great English-speaking peoples; but they cannot give laws to the language, even the written language, of those peoples. Such laws are formed by the undeliberate and almost unconscious action, and settled by

the unexpressed assent, of those peoples themselves, — guided somewhat, but not controlled, as to uniformity in public spelling by printers and proof-readers.

Reform in other matters is possible by law, or by individual or concerted action. Abuses may be thus done away with, old things set aside for better new ones, the right of one day be made by statute law the crime of the next. Not so with language in any of its departments. Some of the spelling reformers speak of change in this matter as if it were like change in any other, — most vainly and ignorantly. You may pull down the house that covers your own head, if you like, and live roofless and hearthless until you can build you another and a better; but you cannot by law or any other force make the language spoken by a people with a past different to-morrow, or next week, or next month, or next year, from what it is to-day. And were this possible, Congress is the very last body to whom the power to do it should be committed.

The phonologists and philologists, notwithstanding their single-eyed devotion to their specialty, have come at last to the perception that an attempt to introduce a phonetic spelling of English, or anything like it, "will not do." A phonetic English orthography would bring in chaos, and put at once a stop to reading books and to communication by writing. Of all these specialists, Mr. Ellis is the most experienced, the most learned in phonology, and, it would seem, the most under the guidance of common-sense. He has invented and proposed for adoption a transition spelling, by which the passage from the orthographic English of to-day to the phonographic English of the

future shall be made easy. Others have made like endeavor; but there being a necessary similarity among all such schemes, and his being likely to be the best, it may well be accepted and considered as a representative of them all. Moreover, he has accompanied it with some remarks which are of great significance and of the utmost importance.

Mr. Ellis calls his scheme of transition spelling "glossic," and he has set it forth in a paper which was read before the British Philological Society, and which he has since issued for private circulation. The title of that work, a pamphlet of thirty-two pages, as it is printed upon the title-page, is worth quoting at full length. It is: —

"On Glosik, a new sistem ov Ingglish speling, proa-poa-zd faur koukur-ent eus, in aurder too remedi dhi di-fekts without dutrak-ting from dhi valeu ov our prezent aarthog-rafi. Bei Aleksaander Jon Ellis, F. R. S., F. S. A., &s., author ov 'Erli Ingglish Proanunsiai-shen,' &s. Ree-printed faur preivet serkeula-shen from dhi transakshens ov dhi Filoaloj-ikel Soasei-iti for 1876."

This method of writing Mr. Ellis calls "glossic," that is, according to the tongue, in opposition to "nomic," the name which he gives to the conventional writing which has prevailed for the last three hundred years with few and slowly made changes. He wrote (that is, composed) this very able paper in the glossic spelling, and he tells us that he found that spelling no check upon the flow of his thoughts. This fact has some value, but not much; because Mr. Ellis has been engaged for thirty years and more in phonetic studies and experiments, and what would be easy to him might be impossible to others. It must be admitted that almost any intelligent and educated

person *can* read this glossic writing with little trouble after some study. But this fact is also of small importance, because we can any of us as easily read and understand a letter mi-spelled from beginning to end. We can read "Josh Billings," and are sometimes not unable to laugh at him, if not always with him.

Mr. Ellis proposes his glossic writing, as I have remarked before, only as a transition from the present spelling to a more perfect one, — "a transitor arroonment," as he calls it. With all his earnest advocacy of reform in spelling, he does not underrate the difficulties in the way of any change. His knowledge of the subject is too great for that. He, an accomplished linguist and philologist, — *facile princeps* of English phonologists, — does not say, "With the simplest form for a letter, and a letter for each sound in the language, there is no need of further theory; what we want is action," as so many others do. Of such reformers, and of such crass iconoclasm, he gives an opinion which I shall render into common English writing: —

"There are many in England, France, Germany, and America who have crude notions on the subject, and of these the least informed would probably be ready with cut-and-dried systems. But there are perhaps not twenty men in the world capable of initiating or discussing any scheme of universal writing. [True phonetic writing is, of course, of universal application.] As regards myself, I can only say that when, in times past, I imagined I could construct such an alphabet, I was very ignorant of what it had to effect, and that I have only some faint glimmerings even yet. As soon as I come out of the friendly obscurity of the study into the broad daylight of practical application, I feel how

I have yet learned, and how much remains to be ac-plished. My glossic writing, therefore [his last expe-], even in its most developed form, is but a transitory nment, a tool to be hereafter discarded. . . . . Even English I regard it as a mere auxiliary scheme, worth of educational and social as well as literary and phil-ical value; quite as good, certainly, as our present or-aphy, and in many respects far superior to it, but not ded to supersede that orthography in which are em-ed the treasures of English thought."

s, frankly, modestly, cautiously, speaks the great-naster of English phonology that has ever lived. who has spent a long life in the study, leaves to the production of their cut-and-dried systems. confesses that his former notions on the subject vain imaginations. He has found that before test of practical application elaborated systems of med writing with brand new alphabets — "a let-r every sound" — crumble up into literary dust ashes. He knows that there are hardly twenty in the world capable even of discussing the for-on of a scheme of phonetic writing. Perhaps ay be able to see, although imperfectly, and by re glance as it were, when the vastness of the ct is considered, why it is that such a reform as d effect the proposed change is so very difficult be practically impossible.

. Ellis says, in the first place, that in glossic ng "the ordinary letters should be used as far as ble in their most ordinary adopted senses, so a passage written in glossic, when only represent-uch sounds as are acknowledged in received pro-iation, should be immediately intelligible to a e reader without instruction." This view of the

case will commend itself to all those who have not a patent ready-made system of forty-two letters, more or less, for forty-two sounds, more or less. Then comes the second requisite, which is this: "The glossic should indicate the precise sound of every word, without ambiguity, and without reference to anything but the sound, so that sound and symbol should be mechanically convertible." Yes, surely; but what sound? This difficulty has been discussed before; but I think that it may be advantageously shown by the testimony of Mr. Ellis himself that to indicate the precise sound of every word without ambiguity is quite impossible, consistently with that certainty, uniformity, and ease of spelling without the attainment of which the reform in question would fail utterly in the very purpose for which it is agitated. For, if we can but approximate, we may as well use one approximation as another; and when one is established as the means of communication between three living generations, and in it are "embalmed the treasures of English thought," there may be said to be no question as to choice.

Passing by a process of reform which compels such spelling as *auldhoa* for *although*, *sein* for *sign*, *skairkroa* for *scarecrow*, *euzejez* for *usages*, *moesyeo* for *monsieur*, and *sheovaalyai* for *chevalier*, although the hard necessity of such cruel and ludicrous distortion is not without importance, let us look at Mr. Ellis's glossic spelling of some words, with an eye not to its desirability or practicability for general adoption, but as indicative of the sound which he gives to those words, or rather, as I venture to say, thinks that he gives to them. I find these spellings of words which a little examination will unravel: *proanuneiaishen*

akwizishen, komeunikaishen, asoashiaishenz, kwestyen, sujestyen, difikelt, praktikel, edeukaishenel. According, then, to his own record of his speech, Mr. Alexander Ellis, Fellow of the Royal Society, late president of the British Philological Society, etc., gives to the syllable spelled *tion* the sound of *shen*, to that spelled *ult* the sound of *elt*, to that spelled *al* the sound of *el*, and he pronounces *suggest sujest*. Now, with high personal regard for him, in addition to the utmost respect for his authority in phonetics, I believe no such thing. I have talked with him, and at one time for hours together, observing his speech closely, as I found afterward he did mine, and I am sure that he does not pronounce as he says he does, but that he gives to the syllable *tion* a sound not clearly expressible with letters, but something between *shon* and *shun*; that in *difficult* he gives the last syllable the sound of *cult*, but very shortly and lightly; and that in *practical* and *educational* his sound of the last syllable is a very short and light *al*, which is something like *le* in the last syllable of *simple*, but is not *el*, his speech following in this respect the usage of educated people. What his pronunciation of *suggest* is I shall not venture to say; but I should almost as soon expect to hear him say *susseed* for *suc-seed* as *sujjest* for *suggest*.

This discrepancy between his appreciation of his own speech and the appreciation of it by another observant person is a matter of the very first importance. It is not peculiar to him and to me. We have already seen (page 180) what discrepancy there was between him and another eminent phonologist, Mr. Bell, as to the way in which each of them pronounced so simple a word as *man*.

Perfect frankness and boldness in facing difficulty are marked traits in Mr. Ellis as a philologist, and I believe as a man; and therefore it is not surprising to hear from him the following confessions, which, when considered in connection with the foregoing facts, are of great significance. They are from a foot-note in his "Glossic:" "Even among highly-educated Englishmen marked varieties of pronunciation exist. . . . . Hence professional orthoëpists have endeavored to determine what pronunciations are correct, *but they do not agree among themselves, and they have vainly striven after principles.*" The italic emphasis is mine. This life-long advocate of phonetic spelling, or I should rather say this honest seeker after a phonetic system, then makes the following remarkable admission: "Any system of notation for sounds should enable us to represent all the prevalent varieties, and *each person should write what he thinks best.*" That this does not apply to glossic writing as a mere record for phonetic purposes is made certain by his subsequent reference to his own glossic writing of *nature*, *failure*, and *verdure*, — *naiteur*, *faileur*, and *verdeur*, — which he says "many might write *naicher*, *failyer*, and *verjer*. Or," he adds, "writers might even object to the use of *r* at all after *aa*, *au*, *u*, and write *naichu*, *failyu*, *vu-ju*, as well as *deen*, *paat*, *laud*, *klaak*, for" — what does the reader think? — "for *deer*, *part*, *lord*, and *clerk*." He does not shirk the consequences, but adds, "And they ought to do so, if they speak so. There is no reason why such usages, although stigmatized now, should not become fashionable a century hence." The history of our language shows that the truth of this admission cannot be disputed; and after this somewhat

azing indication of the approach to ease and uni-
mity of spelling attainable by the phonetic road
the part of its oldest and ablest seeker and advo-
e, I think that we may drop this part of our sub-
t.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INVENTION OF PRINTING: ITS EFFECT UPON ENGLISH SPELLING.

Some reasons have lately been given for the existence of the present English orthography, and some to justify its extinction, which I have not thus far had occasion to consider, but which are not less important or less interesting than those which have already been remarked upon.[1] These I shall examine in the present chapter and in those which follow it in the present division of this book.

First as to the origin of English orthography: one of the great causes, if not the chief cause, of that dreadful condition of English spelling over which the phonetists weep and wail and wring their philological hands, they find in the introduction of the art of printing into England. As to this, it is said, "The importance of its influence in this respect cannot well be overstated. Any confusion which might before have existed in spelling became from this time worse confounded. Upon the introduction of printing, English orthography entered into that realm of Chaos and old Night in which it has ever since been floundering." My observation has led me to an entirely different conclusion, which is that at first printing had no effect whatever upon English spelling, and that the influence which the printing-office

[1] See the papers in *Scribner's Magazine*, mentioned before.

ery gradually exerted upon spelling during the rogress of centuries was toward regularity and uniformity. Early printing is more regular in its orhography than contemporary manuscript is, and the printing-office slowly and gradually (if that may e called gradual which is irregular and fitful in its course) brought about the present orthography, which has at least this value, that it is common to all the millions of the English-speaking peoples. If any student of language who has imbibed this notion about the baneful influence of printing upon spelling will do as I have done, and compare a very early printed book — for example, Caxton's "Game and Playe of the Chesse," or "Dictes and Sayengis of the Philosophirs," fac-similes of which are accessible — with contemporary manuscript or its typographical equivalent, say the "Paston Letters" from No. 700 downward, he will find so much less irregularity in the printer's work than in the writer's, and on further research of the same kind he will find that irregularity diminish so much more perceptibly in the former than in the latter, that I am sure that he will see reason to modify, if not entirely to change, his opinion. For example, in one single letter, written by Edmund Paston (No. 933, A. D. 1492), *wife* is spelled first *wyveffe*, then *wyve*, then *wyffe*, and finally *wyffve*; but good Margaret Paston, writing to her husband, subscribes herself, "Your *yf*, M. P." (No. 809, A. D. 1477). The good lady (who for her true womanliness and perfect wifehood deserves a biography) was phonetic with a vengeance. Now the variation and irregularity exhibited in these words is characteristic of this correspondence, and I do not hesitate to say, after examination, that, great

as are the irregularities of spelling in English books printed at that time, they are less than those of existing English manuscripts contemporary with them, and that the like relation of writing and printing prevails through the subsequent two centuries, at the close of which English spelling became to all intents and purposes what it is now.

It is also not uncommonly believed by those who are afflicted with anxiety on the subject of English spelling, and it has been asserted by some of them, that its old-time irregularities, from which the printers selected the forms which were finally adopted for general use, represented in most cases actual differences of pronunciation. And the notion is plausible, — one of those that we call natural. But I am sure that it will not bear to be confronted with the facts. It ignores the fact, among others, that the same writer at the same time spelled a word in various ways. For example, did Edmund Paston, in the letter cited above, indicate by his spelling four different ways of pronouncing *wife?* Did Margaret Paston, writing to her husband (No. 529, September 21, 1459), indicate a difference of pronunciation by writing *fellowship feleschipp* in one line and *felechip* a few lines below, by spelling *sheriff schreve*, and a few lines after *schryf;* and must we believe that she pronounced *shall* in three different ways in the course of five minutes, because within little more than as many lines she spells it *challe*, *choulle*, and *chulle?* It is not uncommon to find the same writer in long-past days spelling *ded*, *dedde*, and *deade*, or *did* and *dydde*, within a few lines; and in the first act of "Hamlet" the following variations in spelling appear in the old copies: *chapes shapes*, *solemb solemne*,

...on ceasen, *cliff cleef*, *arture artire* (artery), *sin-... sinnews*. The old copies of Chaucer present ... in a dozen different but contemporary spellings: ...*h*, *sauh*, *sawche*, *saugh*, *sagh*, *say*, *seigh*, *segh*, *sigh*, ..., *sy*, *sie*; and there are yet others. The often-... monosyllable *been* appears in all the following ...erent forms in books printed in London within ...nty-five years of each other, and in the Eliza-...han period: *ben*, *bene*, *been*, *beene*, *bin*, *bine*, *byn*, ..., *bynne*.[1]

[1] In illustration of some of these irregularities and apparent inconsist-...s in the same writer, or in co-working writers, see the following ...mples. —

"What, lingering still
About this paltry town Hadst thou *bin* ruldo
By my advice, thou hadst at this time *bene*
A gallant courtyer."

(Chapman, All Fooles, A. D. 1605, page 156, ed. 1873.)

[Within a few lines] "My wings would have *been* clipt. . . . You and ...e *bin* the best benefactors to the ragged regiment of poets. . . I ...re hath *bin* more impressions of severall kinds of lamentable ..., etc. . . . . I am sure I know not so, for had not my wings *beene* ..." (Times Alterations, 1641, Apud Wallington, II., 336.)

"These two bred this unknowne offence
I wo'd they had *bine*."

(Wit Restored, 1658, page 147.)

"Had he *beene* thee or of they fatal tribe."

(The same, page 183.)

"'T had *bin* enough for that poor virgin's sonne
That was incarnate."

(The same, page 186.)

"I wish the world had not this pamphlet scene,
Or having view'd it, it had faultly *been*."

(The same, page 267.)

...lis, the Oxford professor, says that the present pronunciation of *his* ...t tolerated by good speakers in 1653, and that the same is true of ...r *been*, although both were sometimes heard. He says (translating ... that we hear "*his* for *hees* by the same error by which sometimes, or ...y ('*nonnunquam*'), we hear *bin* for *been*, both of which are against the ...gy of the language." This shows, not that the spelling *bin* represented ...ed rhyming with our *kin* and *thin*, but that that spelling represented ...owel sound of *ee*, which made *bin* rhyme with our *keen*, and that the

Such variations in spelling are not records of differences in pronunciation; they are merely evidence of a prevailing irregularity, the consequence of carelessness and uncertainty. But although the opinion that these differences in the written signs of words have any phonetic signification seems to me entirely untenable, this is true: that variations in spelling, when they are found in the manuscript of writers living in various parts of England, are generally records of dialectic variations in speech.

Dialectic variations are, however, not those which the holders of the opinion just referred to have in mind. For example, a recent advocate of phonetic reform says, "The distinguishing trait of the ancient spelling was that it made an effort to represent the ancient pronunciation, and that to attain that end it had no hesitation about sacrificing uniformity;" and he adds that, "consequently, when writers attempted to represent the spoken sound, they differed widely in the orthography *because* there was often a wide difference in the orthoëpy." I have made the word "because" emphatic for the reason that in it alone inheres the entirely misleading part of this whole statement. It is true, to a certain degree, that there was in ancient spelling an effort to represent pronunciation; it is true that the writers of old differed widely in their use of letters; and it is true that there was often a wide difference in their pronunciation. But it is not true that they differed in their spelling because they differed in their pronunciation. For one

ĕ (or ee) in both *his* and *bin* was by some careless speakers sounded with the vowel sound of *kin*. No wonder; for in all language there is no transition so easy, none so difficult to avoid, as that from modern ee to modern short i. In fact, the two sounds in rapid speech are almost indistinguishable. And see the foot-note on page 18.

person would, in the course of the writing of a single brief letter, differ as much from himself or herself as half a dozen others would differ from each other in spelling the same words. Of this variation I have already given a few examples, which make the point plain beyond misapprehension; and, were it necessary to prove the fact in question, they might be easily multiplied by ten thousand. The significance of the fact cannot be misapprehended. One person could not have pronounced a word, dialectically or not, in two or three or four different ways at the same time.

Old-time English spelling, in its effort to represent pronunciation, failed of uniformity, simply because no uniform system of English spelling had yet been elaborated and adopted. Uniformity was not sacrificed, because uniformity was unknown. The printers and proof-readers, working together with the men of letters, had not yet done their part in forming our written language. There was no English orthography before the Elizabethan period; at which time our present system began to take shape, and to assert for itself an authority which it did not absolutely attain until the latter part of the seventeenth century. As early as A. D. 1604, Middleton, in the "Address to the Reader," prefixed to "Father Hubburd's Tale," wrote, "I never wished this book better fortune than to fall into the hands of a true-spelling printer and an honest-minded book-seller." Humphrey King, in the preface to his "Halfe Pennyworth of Wit," published in the year 1613, says of himself, "I am a very bad writer of orthography, and can scarce spell my *abcie* if it were laid before me. The printer may helpe me to deliver to you true English; but as I am

a true man to my God and my King he finds it not in my coppy." Spelling, then, was irregular, but not entirely so; system had begun to prevail; there were printers who were more "true-spelling" than others, and the printing-office, instead of bringing written English to chaos, might be trusted to do something to correct mistakes made by a careless or an uneducated writer.

In support of the position that variations in spelling were caused by variations in pronunciation, there have been brought forward certain examples which it may be well to consider. The first of these is *catch*, which is pronounced by many ignorant or careless speakers *ketch*. We are gravely told that "this word must have been pronounced the same way in the sixteenth century, for occasionally it can be found with the spelling *ketch*." This is worthy of remark only because of the strange selection of this word as an illustrative example, and because of the terms in which its function is set forth. For *ketch* was the general pronunciation of the word in the seventeenth as well as in the sixteenth century. It was taken to Ireland by the Englishmen who went there in the days of Elizabeth and James and Charles and the Commonwealth; and it is mentioned by Sheridan, at the close of the eighteenth century, among the pronunciations in which the "well-educated natives of Ireland" differ from those of England. The occasional spelling *ketch* is evidence, not that some persons pronounced the word *catch* and some others *ketch*, but that *ketch* was the common, if not the universal, pronunciation of *catch*, and this not only in the sixteenth century, but in the seventeenth. Isaak Walton, in the first edition of his "Compleat Angler,"

3, spells *ketch;* but the inference that this rep-
ents a pronunciation peculiar to him or to his
al circle, or one in any way different from that
ogue at the time, is prevented by his more fre-
nt use of the normal form *catch*.

CHAPTER XV.

THE THEORY OF COMPROMISE BETWEEN AND SIGN: RESTORATION OF SILENT L

Upon the differences which appear in the of the same word in the written and printe of days long past, and upon the differenc assumed to have been indicated by that vi visible form, there has been founded a the count for the failure of modern English or to indicate the sounds of words exactly. T is that "we have in modern English not un retained the spelling of the one form and nunciation of the other," or, as it has been expressed, "Modern English gets rid of any in the choice [between different forms] b one form to denote the spelling, and the o note the pronunciation."

In illustration and in support of this t tain words supposed, and indeed asserte strongly characteristic have been put forth ples. The first of these is (for the two are *lish* and *England*, as to which it is said that no better example can be given" of the divarication in question. The spelling i and *England*, and the authorized pronunciat in the dictionaries is *ing-glish* and *ing-gland*. it is asked, "did this divergence come abou the question is glibly answered thus: "To torical student of our tongue the answer

seems a difficult one. In the early speech there were two ways of writing the words, corresponding precisely, without doubt, to the two ways of pronouncing them." Passages are then quoted from the "Cursor Mundi," from Barbour, and from Thomas of Erseldoune, in which the forms *Inglis*, *Inglysche*, and *Ingland* occur, and these are contrasted with Chaucer's nearly contemporary *Englissh*. Now that instances of both spellings are numerous in our early writers is perfectly true. But that a professed philologist, who is instructing his readers in the history of English speech and spelling, should conclude that *therefore* there were two pronunciations of the word, is amazing. He must have momentarily forgotten that in the time of Chaucer, and for centuries afterward, the English *i* represented our modern sound of *ee*, and that the pronunciation of *Inglis* and *Ingland* from the fourteenth century — the date of his examples — to the beginning of the seventeenth would be represented in our orthography by *Eenglees* and *Eengland*, and that the sound of *e* varied at the same time, having sometimes its modern sound, and at others that of *ay*. The historical course of the pronunciation of the first two syllables of the words in question seems to have been *ahngle*, *angle*, *aingle*, *eengle*. As to the early written forms of the word, Venerable Bede has *Angle* ("Angli"); King Alfred, *Ongel* ("ongelpeode") and *Englise;* Bishop Ælfric, *Angle* ("Anglorum"), *Englise*, and *Englisry* ("Englisere spræce"); the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *Englise* and *Engleland;* Layamon's Brut, *Engle*, *Engelond*, and *Engleneland;* the Ormulum, *Ennglissh;* Henry III.'s proclamation, A. D. 1258, *Engleneloande* (precisely, twice); Robert of Gloucester, *Englisse* and *Enge-*

lond: Trevisa (translation of Ralph Higd
lucke and *Engleud*. The introduction of
Inglis and *Ingland*, which appears in the fo
century, seems to have been due to the in
the Norman French upon the then much-mi
lish language. This form marks strongly th
ing of the pronunciation *Eenglish*, which ha
for at least four centuries. As to its prevale
than two centuries ago, we have the direct
of Charles Butler, in his Grammar, 1633, t
fect: "*Eengland* is vulgarly written *Engl*
always sounded *Eengland*." Two other o
of the seventeenth century give the same t
as may be seen in Ellis's great work on th
of English pronunciation (page 1007). A
nunciation was in Chaucer's time and in B
it is to this day, as any observant person w
speaking with the rapidity of ordinary spe
tence in which *Eengland* occurs. It will b
once apparent that without special and deli
fort it is impossible to pronounce *Eengland*
than *Ingland*. Therefore, the conclusion th
was a genuine difference in the sound co
the ear, which naturally found expression in
ence of orthography," is not warranted, bu
verse.

We now come to what is set forth as "
suggestive illustration" that could be pro
show that in modern English we have n
quently "retained the spelling of the one
the pronunciation of the other." This is "
colonel." Perhaps we ought not to be surp
even a philologist should take up this word
lustration of phonetic and orthographic dis

the past, and a ground of argument for phonetic spelling reform in the present; for it is an enticing word. Its first part is spelled *colo*, and is pronounced *cur;* and there is a form of it known to English literature as *coronel* and *cornel.* What wonder, then, that a phonetic reformer who chose *been* and *England* as his examples to the same effect should be led very specifically to declare that there "was an early and wide-spread use of the particular pronunciation [*curnel*] which has now become universal," and that when "the tendency toward a fixed and unvarying orthography became more and more decided, ... the same blundering compromise was made; the pronunciation of the one form [*curnel*] had become general, and was necessarily retained, but along with it was retained the spelling [*colonel*] of the other!" Unfortunately for the argument grounded upon it, this assertion is not true. There was no early and wide-spread adoption of the pronunciation in question; nor, when a fixed orthography was adopted, was that pronunciation retained along with the incongruous spelling.

The history of this word is somewhat interesting. Its pronunciation in Walker's day (the same as now) seemed to that orthoëpist "one of those gross irregularities which must be given up as incorrigible." *Colonel* is merely the English form of the Italian *colonello*, which is itself a diminutive of *colonna*, a *column*, and means, therefore, a little *column*. The little column or company at the head of a regiment was called *colonello*, which name was naturally transferred to the leader of the column, that is, the commander of the regiment. From the Italian language this name for that officer went, in the sixteenth cent-

ury, into the Spanish and the French languages, and also into the English. In the Spanish language it became *coronel*, and so remains. The change of *l* to *r* is a common one in language, ancient and modern, the world over.

The first appearance of the title in our language is in the form *coronel*, which is found in the latter part of the sixteenth century. The use of this form of the word at that time is due to the predominance of Spanish military power, and to the fact that English military officers were frequently brought into relations of some sort with those of Spain. The word having been used by some Englishmen in the latter part of the sixteenth century in the form *coronel*, it was a plausible and enticing inference that that pronunciation prevailed then, remained in vogue thereafter, and came down to us from that time, accompanying the written form *colonel*. That this is a mistake I shall proceed to show.

The form *coronel* seems to have been almost confined to military writers and a few others, and soon to have disappeared from common writing and from common speech, if it ever obtained a foot hold in the latter, which I am inclined to doubt. The earliest use of the word in literature of which, until recently, I had a memorandum is in Thomas Dekker's comedy "The Shoe-maker's Holiday," which was written in 1599, and published in the following year. This is a little earlier than that cited by Skeat in his Etymological Dictionary from Holland's "Pliny," 1601, where it appears as *coronel*. Examples some ten years earlier have been cited, in the form *coronel*, but they are found in the military correspondence of the Earl of Leicester, then in command of the En

tish forces serving in the Netherlands against the Spaniards, who used the form *coronel*, and from whom the earl doubtless got the new title. Spenser, however, used this word in his "View of the Present State of Ireland," which was written in 1595, but remained unpublished until 1633. Dr. Johnson, citing Spenser as what is strangely called "authority" for the use of the word, represents him as using it in the form *colonel*, and Dr. Latham does the same, merely, it is to be supposed, adopting Johnson's quotation. This, however, is incorrect, as I found on a recent reading of Spenser's "View." He spells the word *coronel*, not only in the passage quoted by Johnson, but in every other in which I met with it.[1] This is probably the earliest appearance of the word in our literature in any form. It antedates by four years the passage in Dekker, which, however, is interesting, because it presents both forms of the word used by the same writer at the same time. It will be seen that in the first example the word must be spoken as a trisyllable for the rhythm's sake: —

"I thanke his grace he hath appointed him
Chief *colonell* of all those companies
Mustred in London and the shires about."
(The Shoe-maker's Holiday, 1600, Act I., Scene 1.)

"Here be the cavaliers and the *coronels*, master."
(The same, Act I., Scene 1.)

[1] "And afterwardes theyr *coronell*, named Don Sebastian, came foorthe & intreate that they might parte with theyr armes like souldiours," etc.

'Whereupon the sayd *coronel* did absolutely yeeld himselfe and the forte," etc.

"But the cheifest helpe for prevention hereof must be the care of the *coronel* that hath the government of all his garrison."

"But what say you of the *coronell*? what authorityе thinke you meete to give him?"

"In all which the greate discretion and uprightness of the corone. himself is to be the cheifest stay," etc. (Pages 656, 657, ed. Morris.)

The latter form both in spoken and in written language seems to have gradually, but quickly, passed out of use.

That *colonel* was pronounced in three syllables in the middle of the seventeenth century two well-worn examples have been relied upon as evidence; this line from one of Milton's sonnets: —

"Captain or *Colonel* or knight in arms,"

and the following couplet from Butler's "Hudibras:" —

"Then did Sir Knight abandon dwelling,
And out he rode a *colonelling*."

In both of these passages the measure requires, and in the second both the measure and the rhyme require, the pronunciation of *colonel* in three syllables, and it is admitted that there is no reason to believe that the *l* when written was then sounded as if it were *r*. But if *colonel* were then pronounced as it is written, where is the evidence in this word of that "blundering compromise" between sound and spelling upon which the philological reformers insist so strongly? And the word having then been pronounced in three syllables, with the first as *col*, where is the evidence of "that permutation of *l* and *r* . . . . at the time of its introduction" into English and French to which its present pronunciation has been so confidently attributed? When, indeed, since speech was first used by man, was there not a change of *l* to *r*, and in what language, supposing, always, that there was an *l* and an *r* to interchange?[1]

[1] The inability of the Chinese to pronounce *r* and their substitution of *l* for it, and the converse inability of the Japanese to pronounce *l*, for which they use *r*, I have already remarked upon (page 47). Wallis tells us that the American Indians in New England (A. D. 1656) could pronounce neither *l* nor *r*, so that for *lobster* they said *nobstan*: "Literas *L* et *R* pro

here is good reason why the passages from Mil-
sonnet and from "Hudibras" should have
much used and relied upon; for the word is
common one in literature before the eighteenth
ry, and to have any determining power as to its
pronunciation it must be found in well-measured
. It does not occur in Shakespeare (nor does it
Bible), although we have there *general*, *captain*,
ant, and *ensign* ("ancient"). The following
ges from writers of the Elizabethan period have
y direct bearing upon the pronunciation of the
. In Middleton's play, "A Fair Quarrel," there
ersonage called simply the *Colonel*, and that he
alled *col-o-nel*, and not *cornel*, seems plain: —

— "That being young,
Should have an anger more inclined to courage
And moderation than the *Colonel*"
(Act I., Scene 1.)

"Consider then the man, the *Colonel*."
(Act II., Scene 1.)

"And with that reverence I receive the gift
As it was sent me, worthy *Colonel*."
(Act IV., Scene 3.)

inger furnishes the following examples in
: —

"Two long hours since
The *Colonels*, Commissioners, and Captains
To pay him all the rites," etc
(The Unnatural Combat, 1615, Act III., Scene 2.)

"Desert in these days!
Desert may make a Sergeant to a *Colonel*,
And it may hinder him from rising higher."
(The Maid of Honor, Act III., Scene 1.)

"His *Colonel* looks finely like a drover
That hath a Winter laid perdue in the rain."
(The Fatal Dowry, Act II., Scene 2.)

non posse, sed Ipsorum loco *N* substituere; adeoque *Nobstan* ro Lobstar." This seems to confirm the view of the lateness of trance of these consonants in speech which is taken in Chapter III

"Nay, to provoke you, Sir, to call to account
This *Colonel* Romont, for the foul wrong," etc.
(The same, Act IV., Scene I.)

"And, as I said, Meg, when this gal. disturb'd us,
This honorable lord, this *Colonel*"
(A New Way to Pay Old Debts, Act III., Scene I.

I have many more illustrations of this kind at hand, but I forbear to weary my parishioners, in this way, any further. These passages from two writers born in the latter part of the sixteenth century,—Middleton about 1570 and Massinger in 1584,—the latter of whom continued to write in the time of Charles I. and the Commonwealth, are sufficient evidence, it would seem, that the form *colonel* prevailed in England from a time soon after the first introduction of the word to the time of Milton. From him we pass to the contemporaries of Butler; and their pronunciation (illustrated above) brings us down to the time of James II. It is proper, however, to say that in the writings of the poets of the earlier of these periods there are passages which show that the word was occasionally contracted by them into two syllables. But, in the first place, what word would not the poets of that period contract? And, next, the question is to be settled whether the contracted form was *colnel* or *cornel*. There is evidence of weight that it was the former.

The dramatist Farquhar, who was born in the reign of Charles II., and who wrote in the reigns of William and Mary and of Queen Anne, has in his comedy, "Sir Harry Wildair," a personage named Colonel Stannard. Now, this personage's title is abbreviated by most of the speakers. Some of them speak to him or of him by his full title, but by most of them it is clipped, and then it is written not

merely *Col*, with one *l*, but with two, *Coll*, unmistakable evidence of the pronunciation. Thus: "Ay, says a sneering coxcomb, the *Coll.* has made his fortune with a witness." (Page 4, ed. 1711.) "'Han't the *Coll.* a name of his own?' 'Well, then, the *Coll.*'" (The same, page 12.) "Lard, Lard, *Coll.!* what a room have you made here with your dirty feet!" (The same, page 13.) "I 'm a pretty gentleman.—*Coll.*, where 's your wife?" (The same, page 16.) I forbear to quote any others, and will only say that I have about a score more examples from this play. These speeches, it is to be remarked, are made by the commoner personages of the play; but when the elegant Sir Harry Wildair addresses the Colonel, he gives him his full title, and that is spelled, it should be also noted, not with one *l*, but with two. "*Wildair.*—What d' ye think of the ghost now, *Col.onel?* Is it not a very loving ghost?" (Ed. 1711, page 48.) "*Wild.*—Oh, *Collonel!* such discoveries." (Page 50.) "*Wild.*—Then, *Collonel*, we 'll have a new wedding." (Page 20.)[1]

Again, we have positive and unmistakable testimony that this word was pronounced, not *cornel*, but *colnel*, in the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1701, J. M. D. Jones published his "Practical Phonography," the purpose of which is shown by his explanation that it is "the new art of rightly spelling and writing words by the sound thereof, and of

[1] It may be worth while to remark that in the course of the play the Colonel's title is given him in full eighteen times, and that it is spelled with two *l*'s twelve times. When abbreviated, which it is seventeen times, it is always given with two *l*'s, *Coll*. Beau Baxter, when he is telling the Colonel his position, says, "You are still a dishonoured *colonel*, and she is still a woman of quality, I take it." But, directly afterward, merely addressing him by his title, he abbreviates it: "*Coll.*, your humble servant."

[illegible] reading words in the [illegible] English tongue." [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

tion of that letter in those words was passing away, or had already passed away, but was not yet forgotten. When the pronunciations *woud* and *shoud* were firmly established, the *l* came back again. As to the pronunciation *colnel* in the beginning of the last century, there is the positive testimony of the phonographist, Jones, before mentioned. And finally, as to the continuance of this pronunciation fifty years longer, we have the testimony of Dr. Johnson. His dictionary does not give pronunciations; indeed, in his day pronouncing dictionaries were not known; but of this word he gives the pronunciation with particularity, thus: "It is now generally sounded with only two distinct syllables, *col'nel*." In 1755, then, the two-syllable pronunciation was general, but not universal, and the first syllable was not *cor*, but *col*.

Now this pronunciation *colnel* having been once reached, the passage to *curnel* was sure and swift. This any of my readers will soon discover by saying *colnel* a few times easily and quickly. It will be found that the combination *ln* cannot very easily be distinguished from that of *rn*, if the *r* is really articulated, that is, trilled, although ever so lightly. *Colnel* and *cornel* with a trilled *r* are as like as two words can be which are at all unlike. The tendency, however, will be found to be for the *l* to pass through *r* into extinction. Once eliminate the *o* which separates the *l* from the *n*, and *curnel* comes soon, and *cunnel* soon after. A word like *colonel* was as sure to become *curnel* in ordinary speech, and finally *cunnel*, as summer is to follow spring, and autumn summer. And this is the history of the word, as we know. Our great-great-grandfathers said *colnel*; our

grandfathers *curnel*, as we do; but long ago slovenly and rustic speakers said *cunnel*.

This being the history of the word, it is plain that when its orthography was settled as c o l o n e l in the earliest years of the seventeenth century, no "blundering compromise" was made between one form of spelling and another of pronouncing. For a hundred and fifty years and more the word was pronounced literally according to its written form; and we have here, as in *been* and in *England*, an entire failure to support the theory that the modern relations of spoken and written English are in a great measure due to the fact that "when two methods of writing the same word were in common use we have not unfrequently retained the spelling of the one form and the pronunciation of the other!"

I do not, however, mean to assert that there are no words in the English language of which this is true. For, besides that general negative assertions are very dangerous to the maker, I do know one word which (*faute de colonel*) might serve, if not as a basis for the support of the theory in question, at least as an illustration of it; and this word is, oddly enough, another military title, — *lieutenant*. The pronunciation of this word, by all good English speakers, has for centuries been *leftenant*. That is its pronunciation now in England and in Ireland, and by the best speakers in America. Very anciently it was spelled *lieutenant*, as now. Gower writes *leutenant*. Lord Berners, in his translation of Froissart, A. D. 1523, writes, "vycar generall and *lieftenant* for the emperour." Some seventy-five years later Thomas Churchyard, a poor poet, but a careful phonographic speller, writes: —

"O falls forsworn, whatear you aer give place
To mighty lovs *lieftenant* here on earth."
(Wished Reformacion of Wicked Rebellion, 1598, page 1.)

Sir Philip Sidney, or his printer, spelled the word in the same way: —

"And on my thoughts give thy *lieftenancy*."
(Astrophel and Stella, 106, ed. 1605, page 569.)

Lieutenant was, however, the general spelling even in the olden time; *lieftenant* the rare phonographic exception; and for the last three hundred years *lieutenant* has been absolute in spelling, and *leftenant* as absolute in pronunciation. The pronunciation *lootenant* is not only an Americanism, but one of very late origin. I never heard it in my boyhood. It has begun to prevail recently, and is a manifestation of spelling-book speech and public-school teaching. Only those who must go to spelling-books and to dictionaries to know what language is, and who speak "by the card" and not by the ear, would teach such a pronunciation. Here, then, *is* a word in which there *has* been a deliberate preservation of a form of writing concurrent with a directly opposed form of pronunciation.

Lieutenant came into the English language from the French; and as it came with the sound of *u*, its obtaining that of *f* is worthy of remark. That came about, it seems to me, in this way: In old writing, *u* and *v* were interchanged, and this led to the pronunciation of *liev-tenant* as *leev*-tenant, which became *lief*-tenant, and finally *lef*-tenant.

It is apropos and not without interest that another military title apparently had a pronunciation different from that of to-day, *major*, which seems to have been sounded *mayor*, in conformity to a fashion

of pronouncing *j* upon which I remarked years ago in my "Memorandums of English Pronunciation in the Elizabethan Era." We even find the word so written, for example, in the following passage in the diary of Sir Henry Slingsby, a Royalist commander in the Great Rebellion, who seems also not to have pronounced *colonel curnel*.

"My regiment was left in Stamport Bridge by order from the *Mayor* General, and to receive further orders from *Colonell* Thronmerton," etc. (A. D. 1642. Page 93. ed. 1836.)

The fortune of the *l* in *colonel* connects itself with another argument which is made much of by the spelling revolutionists. This is that silent letters should be dropped in writing as they are in speech, because they are useless now, and will remain unused ever hereafter. Thus the man who prefers *deign*, *feign*, and *impugn* to *dein*, *fein*, and *impiun* is scoffed at for his desire to retain a letter *g* "which he can never possibly use;" and as regards "the silent *k* of the word *knave*," we are told that "there is not the slightest probability that anybody will ever pronounce it in the future." How do they know this? How can it be known by anybody? I cannot suppose that philologists who have undertaken to upturn the written English language from its very foundations are ignorant of the fact that letters once silent in our language have been restored to speech. This letter *l* in particular has been preserved to us in many words by the art of printing, whose function as to written language they find so pernicious, and it has been heard in those words by the common unexpressed consent of the last three or four generations although it had been silent through preceding centuries.

A few examples of old phonographic spelling will illustrate what must be known to all students of English, not excepting possibly some of the professional philologists. *Altar* was pronounced *auter* and *psalter sawter*, as will be seen in the following passage. There are hundreds like it, but not many in which *psalm* also appears with the *l*: —

"Theyr consceyence purge fro the synnes seven,
Or they presum to go to the *awtere*,
The same *psalme* set in the *psawtere*."
(Lydgate, The Vertue of the Masse, A. D. 1500.)

Realm was also pronounced *ream*, as might be shown by many examples, but not by many in which it is sandwiched between two controlling words, as in the first of the following passages: —

"As the King in earth supreame,
Head of the church of this *realme*,
Onely to be our joyful beam."
(Thomas Gibson, Breve Cronycle of the Byssbope of Rome's Blessing, A. D. 1550.)

"Never did King set foote on English ground
With more applaud than our renowmed James;
For as great ioyes within our heartes abound,
As ever were contained in all his *realmes*."
(God Save the King, 1603, Hulth's reprint.)

Fault was also pronounced *faut*, of which the illustrative examples are countless; but here is one, from the sermons of an illustrious martyr, by which we see that he, or his reporter, recognized the *l*, although he did not sound it: —

"To make themselves *faultlesse*, or at least way they will diminish their *fautes*." (Latimer, Sermons, ed. 1562, folio 68.)

So, too, *vault* was pronounced *vaut*, and *assault assaut* (it will be observed that all these words are of French origin); and the word that looks so odd to

as, *salvage*, in the phrases "salvage man," "salvage beasts," in old books, was not pronounced with an *l* in the first syllable, but at first *sourvahge*, then *savvahge*, then, after the *l* was dropped, *sahvahge*, and lastly *sredg*. Of this lifting of *l* out of silence into speech the word *falcon* is an interesting example. In "America," even among good speakers, this word is pronounced to rhyme exactly with the first two syllables of *balcon-y*, and this pronunciation is beginning to assert itself in England, where, however, the pronunciation of good speakers has been, as it has been here, *fawkn*. Indeed, this pronunciation is given not only by the majority of the best English orthoëpists (some giving *fal-con*), but by "Webster" and "Worcester." It is needless to quote for the sake of establishing, or even of illustrating, this point, but the following passage illustrates the petrifaction of this pronunciation in the proper name *Falkner* (a falconer) : —

> "Birds so poor
> They seem scarce worth the killing; with the lark,
> (The morning's *fawlkner*), so they may mount, hie," etc.
> (Dekker, The Whore of Babylon, 1607, page 230, ed. 1873.)

It is worthy of remark, that although this word came through French from Latin, and although the Latin is *falco*, and the Old French *faulcon*, the *l* was not pronounced in Old English and does not appear in the word in the manuscript of early English writers, who spell the first syllable *fau*. The restoration of the *l* in later times did not alter the pronunciation. Indeed, *l* came to be regarded as the silent sign of a broad vowel, and was used in words in which it had no proper place; for example, *hawk* : —

> "Let me but *hawlke* at him, and like the other,
> He shall confess all.

Let me but *hawke* at him, as at the rest
Where would you find such game as you would *hawke* at?"
(Chapman, Bussy d'Ambois, 1607, Act III., Scene 1.)

The proper name *Ralph* was until a comparatively recent period always pronounced *Rafe*, as indeed it is pronounced by some old and punctilious people.[1] So, also, *water* was pronounced *Water*. Of this well-known pronunciation there is whimsical illustration in Middleton's comedy "Michaelmas Term." An adventurer named Andrew Gruel changes his name to Lethe, — the river of oblivion. He enters: —

"Who's this?
"In the name of the black angels, Andrew Gruel!"
"No, Andrew Lethe."
"Lethe?
"Has forgot his father's name.
"Poor Walter Gruel, that begot him, fed him,
"And brought him up."
(Act I., Scene 3.)

Andrew Lethe's father's name was plainly Water Gruel; but the *l* was sounded in Walter in the last century.

I could point out many such examples of the complete disappearance of letters once silent, vowels as well as consonants, but it would be both superfluous and wearisome. The *u*, for example, used never to be heard in *coate* and *banquet*, which, till a comparatively recent period, were pronounced *kote* and *banket*. In *corrupt* the *p* was silent for centuries, so that the word was oftener than otherwise written without it. For example: —

"I will not have my traine
Made a retreat for *bankroutes*, nor my court
A hive for droanes, proude beggars and true thieves."
(Chapman, Byron's Conspiracy, 1608, Act I., Scene 1.)

[1] In the preliminary matter to *Penelope's Complaint*, A. D. 1596, addressed to the widow of Sir Ralph Horsey, his name is spelled *Rafe* and *Raph*, never *Ralph*.

Here we have letters, both consonants and vowels, which were silent for centuries, brought boldly forward into speech, and in the case of *falcon* the transformation is going on before our eyes, or, rather, in our very ears.

To the foregoing examples I add more briefly the following to show that letters once silent do not always remain so. In the seventeenth century and in the early part of the last, *a* was silent in *acquit*, *abuse*, and *arrears*; *c* in *perfect*, *verdict*, and *wicked*; *d* in *merchant*, *children*, *commandment*, *handle*, *candle*, *goldsmith*, and *handsome*; *e* in *marry*, *l* in *counsel*, in addition to the words mentioned above; *a* in *pattern* and *kiln*; *o* in *coin*, *destroy*, *ointment*, *oil*, *oyster*, *broil*, *join*, *point*, *poison*, *soil*; *t* in *hasty*; *u* in *conduit*, and in *venture*, *lecture*, and all words ending in *ure* it had the sound of close, short *e*, as in *inter*; *o* in *housewife*; *w* in *backward*, *forward*, and *Edward*. Moreover, *h* was heard between *s* and *u* in *sue*, *suet*, *suicide*, *supreme*, *supremacy*, *suit*, and *suitor*, as it is now in *sure* and in *sugar*. Sometimes, but very rarely, we find it phonographically written, as, for example: —

> "Durst my sonne, thus rebell to his dutie,
> Steale up a match *mashuting* to his estate?"
> (Chapman, All Fooles, 1605, Act II., Scene 1.)

This pronunciation gave Shakespeare an opportunity for a pun on *suitor* and *shooter* in "Love's Labor's Lost."

> "*Boyet.* Who is the suitor? who is the suitor?
> *Rosaline.* Shall I teach you to know?
> *Boyet.* Ay, my continent of beauty.
> *Rosaline.* Why, she that bears the bow."
> (Act IV., Scene 1.)

Indeed, in the original edition *suitor* is here pho

ographically printed *shooter*, and in the previous act we have *shue* for *sue*. This pronunciation lingered in New England (and I believe in Old England too) until the second quarter of this century. I remember having heard in my boyhood very old people, persons of education and breeding, say *shupreme*.

In the face of these facts, and when we have such a man as Professor Newman urging the restoration to sound of letters now silent (see Chapters IV. and V.), is it not, to say the least, somewhat rash, if not presuming, for speculative philologists to venture upon a prediction as to what silent letter may not be heard once more, or heard at last, though never heard before? And is there not a warning to us in this not to disturb the silent letters in our written language, — *quieta non movere?*

Here we have letters, both consonants and vowels, which were silent for centuries, brought boldly forward into speech, and in the case of *falcon* the transition is going on before our eyes, or, rather, in our very ears.

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> "Durst my sonne, thus rebell to his dutie,
> Steale up a match *unshuting* to his estate?"
> (Chapman, All Fooles, 1605, Act II., Scene 1.)

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CHAPTER XVI.

JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY: ITS RELATION TO ESTABLISHED ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY.

NOT only phonetic spelling reformers and philologists, but many others, assign to Dr. Johnson's Dictionary an important agency in the formation of the orthography of the present time. This, we are told, "was practically fixed by Johnson's Dictionary, and as he left it such it has, with unimportant exceptions, remained." Again it is said, "Johnson's Dictionary almost instantly petrified the forms of the words included in it. The universal adoption of the spelling employed by him arrested even the few processes toward simplification that were then going on." Yet again: "It was not until the appearance of Johnson's Dictionary, in 1755, that the orthography can be said to have become fixed;" and we are told, moreover, that "the injury that Johnson did the orthography of our tongue can hardly be ascribed to his teachings."

It is worth the while of those who are giving attention to this subject to have these opinions set before them specifically and in detail, because they are so generally entertained; having been adopted inconsiderately, I venture to think, by a very large number of those who have interested themselves in English spelling. Indeed, it would be safe to say that nearly if not quite all such persons believe that Dr. Johnson, by his dictionary, did very much — far

re than any other person — to form our present glish orthography, and that he did absolutely fix t orthography and impose it upon the English-k ng peoples.

This belief is altogether erroneous. Johnson nei- r formed nor fixed English orthography. There s no adoption, universal or partial, of the spell- employed by Johnson. It is not true that Eng- orthography cannot be said to have become d until 1755, the date of the appearance of John- 's Dictionary. Johnson did the orthography of English tongue no harm; nor did he do it any d.

Johnson did not form, in any degree, our modern hography, because he took it simply as he found

His spelling was not "adopted" universally or rtially, because people went on spelling after the blication of his dictionary just as they had spelled seventy-five years before that event. English or- ography was as much fixed during that antecedent riod as it has been in any period since. This being e, it follows that Johnson did English spelling ther harm nor good.

That it is true will, I think, plainly appear upon presentation of certain facts in the case. I had, general way, come long ago to the conclusions set forth; but wishing to have my conclusions upon some specific and characteristic facts, I le certain books the subject of careful comparison. as dreary drudgery, but when you wish to know number of persons at a table there is only one of coming at the knowledge, — to "count noses." uld not if I would repeat here the details of my parison and in mercy to my readers I would not

do so if I could. I shall merely present facts enough to make the matter clear

Johnson's Dictionary was published in 1755. The first edition of Isaak Walton's "Compleat Angler" was published in 1653, — to all intents and purposes just a century before the dictionary. Walton, although he was not, like that master of English style, John Bunyan, a wholly illiterate man, was yet uneducated, and was not a good speller for his day; but we may pass over that disability (which makes against the view here presented) in consideration of the position of his book in literature, and of its date. An examination of the words upon a hundred pages of the original edition of the "Compleat Angler," and the comparison of them with Johnson's Dictionary, shows 135 words which are spelled in the former as they are not in the latter; that is, less than one word and a half in a page.

Advancing some twenty-five years, I examined two books by Lord Chief Justice Sir Matthew Hale, who, unlike Walton, was a scholar and a man of letters. The first was his "Life of Pomponius Atticus," which was published in 1677. The first edition of this book shows (I do not go into the details of the comparison in this instance), in three chapters, making 103 pages, and containing 17,716 words, 42 words the spelling of which differs from Dr. Johnson's. Many of these are repeated; but counting all the repetitions, there is less than one word in 185 the spelling of which differs from the Johnsonian "standard."

This book, however, contains many typographical errors; and to show that these were not disregarded in those days, I mention that in my copy they are corrected in a contemporary hand. But this work was published anonymously, and seems to have been

one of those to which the Chief Justice refers in the preface of the next book of his which I examined as "some writings of mine [which] have without my privity come into print." I therefore examined his "Primitive Origination of Mankind," which also was published in 1677, but under his own supervision. The large folio pages of this work contain, in round numbers, 600 words each. On 30 of these pages, containing 18,000 words, I found only 25 words the spelling of which differs from that of Johnson's Dictionary. But repetitions (for example *meer* or *meerly* four times, *subtil* four times, *agil* thrice) brought the number of variations to 41. This in 18,000 gives, within a fraction, only one word in 400 in which Sir Matthew Hale, who in 1677 was sixty-six years old, and therefore somewhat old-fashioned, differed from the "standard" orthography of Johnson's Dictionary, which was published in 1755, three quarters of a century later!

It is sufficient to say that other examinations and comparisons of the same kind led to substantially the same results; and that finally the examination of books of a date one quarter of a century later than Sir Matthew Hale's discovered no difference whatever (except in an occasional manifest slip of the press or of the pen) between their spelling and that of Johnson's Dictionary. There the "Johnsonian" words were; the *governour*, the *candour*, the *honour*, the *musick*, the *politick*, and all the rest of them. There was no difference whatever; and yet this left half a century to pass before the appearance of the great dictionary. Moreover, in the course of that half century there appeared a very important, and to this day a very useful, dictionary of the English language, Bailey's, the first edition of which was published, I

believe, in 1726. Now, Bailey's spelling is ex
that of Johnson. I have not been able to find
word in which they differ, except *governour*, w
Bailey spells *governor*, and even this is not in
ably a typographical error.

The case is simply this: Bailey spelled wo
he found them spelled in the literature of the d
the books of the best contemporary writers.
son, Steele, Pope, and their fellows were his
thorities" for spelling. The same is true
Johnson. He found his orthography in the
which were the English classics of his day,
formed the body of the elegant literature o
time; that is, the works of the writers who h
tained reputation in the half century previous t
publication of his dictionary. Instead of est
ing a standard to which his contemporaries a
immediate successors conformed, instead of "
ing" a spelling to which they showed a "
deference," *he*, with deference to established for
if that may be called deference which was ha
be avoided, — "slavishly" recorded the orthog
of his contemporaries and of his predecessors fo
a century, an orthography which a preceding di
ary maker had in like manner accepted and rec
and for the same reason.

This being true, the truth of my other propo
follows in the simple course of reason. For th
tinuance and careful preservation for half a c
after the publication of Johnson's Dictionary (
brings us down to the year 1800) of the orthog
which had been established and carefully pre
for at least half a century previous to the date o
tremendous lexicographical event is plainly n

to the literary authority of Samuel Johnson. The same power which established the orthography in vogue in 1800 and in 1700, and preserved it for fifty years before the appearance of Dr. Johnson upon the field of lexicography, preserved it after that imposing manifestation. That power was the consent of the educated classes of the English people, expressed through their representatives, the great writers and scholars of the day, counseled and assisted by intelligent and educated printers and correctors of the press. These were the men, and not Dr. Johnson, who gave us our present way of writing English. It was by their labors, extending through two centuries, but coming rapidly to a destined result just before the reign of Queen Anne, that a uniform and, despite all that has been said, a tolerably consistent standard of orthography was attained in the English language.

It is the recognition by such men of the general fitness and the supreme convenience of that standard that has preserved it essentially thus far, and not in any way the authority of Dr. Johnson, who did English spelling neither harm nor good; no harm, even if change and progress toward phonetic spelling is a necessary condition of freedom from evil. For Johnson has been as powerless to prevent change as he was apparently unable or undesirous to begin it. English orthography has been less stable, less fixed, since the appearance of his dictionary than it was before that event. A volume of Macaulay's "Essays" differs more in spelling from Johnson's "standard" than a volume of Addison's — for example, his "Freeholder" — does in the same respect. Thus much for England; and when we cross to America, and compare Webster's Dictionary with Johnson's,

we find that in its [illegible] variations in spelling [illegible] not to be compared with the principal predecessor of Johnson, for Johnson's spelling is but Bailey's. Nor is it to be compared with the authors of a quarter of a century preceding Bailey's, for again Johnson's spelling, like Bailey's, is but their spelling. Johnson, as he did nothing to form English orthography, has done nothing to fix it.

The matter of a settled and uniform orthography was coming rapidly to a head about the middle of the seventeenth century, wholly without the aid of lexicographers, great or small. This may be illustrated by a classification of the words above referred to in Walton which differ from that standard which, by silent and common consent of the best writers, had been adopted somewhat before A. D. 1700. Of those 135 words in the [illegible] pages of Walton's "Compleat Angler," the only difference in no less than 55, more than one third of the whole number, is the mere addition of a superfluous *e*, — *wee* for *we*, *beare* for *bear*, *businesse* for *business*, *alwayes* for *always*, and so forth. In 26 the only difference is the use of *ie* for *y* final, — *pitie* for *pity*, *flie* for *fly*, *antiquitie* for *antiquity*, and so forth. In 14 the difference is that of one final *l* for two, as *til* for *till*. In four the difference is the absence of a final *e*, as *partridg* for *partridge*. In three the perfect participle is spelled (as it frequently is nowadays) with *t* instead of *ed*, as *fixt* for *fixed*.[1]

[1] In an examination of Walton's spelling heretofore I set forth his variations from standard orthography as being considerably fewer than those mentioned above. The difference is partly due to the enumeration in the present calculation of repetitions, and also of all variations whatever, such, for example, as *Ile* and *Hostis*, although these are plainly not intentionally spellings of *I will* or of the feminine of *Hoste*.

will be seen that in all these words the varia-
are merely terminal; they do not touch the
, the real structure, of the word. They leave
l in which the body of the word is affected, —
ples are *sowr* for *sour*, *neer* for *near*, *ketch* for
, *pibble* for *pebble;* and of these not a few may
irly set down to the good angling sempster's
shioned ways.

hen we come to examine Sir Matthew Hale's
ng, we find that the superfluous terminal *e* has
t entirely disappeared; it is found in but four
: *systeme*, *atome*, *saye*, and *essaye*. The final
pears in four: *satisfie*, *busie*, *phantasie*, and *sig-*
. The final *e* is omitted in four: *agil*, *engin*,
, and *tast*. The doubled consonant is omitted
ree: *setled*, *enobled*, and *dazle*, which may be
ints. But of mere terminal irregularities there
ery few instances, even reckoning *condescention*
e; and the uncertainty appears chiefly in such
ngs as *cloaths*, *œconomical*, *extreamly*, *voyce*,
ledge, *chuse*, and so forth. But it is to be re-
bered that these variations, all told, including
itions, show a difference from the spelling of
son's Dictionary of only one word in 400! To
point had the discipline of the printing-office
the common consent of scholars and writers
ght English spelling more than three quarters
century before the appearance of Johnson's Dic-
ry. The next quarter of a century perfected a
dard which it imposed upon Dr. Johnson, but
h the alleged authority of Dr. Johnson has not
able to impose so absolutely upon succeeding
rs and makers of dictionaries. We are con-
d, therefore, to conclusions wholly at variance

with the teachings of some enthusiastic phoneti
ing reformers upon this subject.

It may be well to set forth concisely and in
order the positions which have been taken in th
going division. These are, —

(1.) Language is speech, of which writing
the representation, but the suggestion. (Pag
145, 166.)

(2.) Spelling has nothing to do with speech:
words are not formed by a combination of
sounds, as written words are formed by combi
of signs: words, not letters, are pronounced.
128, 145, 168.)

(3.) A certain non-conformity of speech an
ing is inevitable, and is the growth of circums
(Pages 124, 171.)

(4.) The difficulty of learning to spell ha
much exaggerated by phonetic enthusiasts, an
apprehended by other persons. (Pages 127, 17
202.)

(5.) The economical disadvantages of the r
English spelling have also been monstrously
gerated. (Pages 141, 174.)

(6.) The economical disadvantages of a p
change in the spelling of English would be so
as to be calamitous. (Page 175.)

(7.) Phonetic spelling involves changes in t
language from time to time. (Page 137.)

(8.) The introduction of phonetic spelling
make the written English of the past a dead
and English literature from the time of Sp

Bacon, and Shakespeare a dead literature, except in transliteration. (Page 191.)

(9.) Phonetic spelling involves an entire change in the structure of written English. (Page 190.)

(10.) The function of science as to language is not to improve it, but to study it historically, comparatively, and analytically. (Page 125.)

(11.) Philologists are incompetent, and out of place, as reformers of written language. (Pages 139, 207.)

(12.) Spelling, like speech, is not for the convenience of philologists and phonologists, but for the every-day use of three coexisting generations of men, who wish not only to communicate with each other, but with past and with future generations. The question as to spelling is chiefly one of practical convenience — to-day. (Page 181.)

(13.) Printing did not introduce confusion into written language, but, on the contrary, was the means of an approximation to a systematic and uniform orthography. (Pages 158, 223.)

(14.) Modern English orthography is not the result of a blundering compromise between sound and written form. (Pages 230–249.)

(15.) The received spelling of English is in no way the result of Dr. Johnson's labors. His dictionary merely recorded a spelling which had been established for fifty years, and that spelling it has not been able to fix. (Pages 251–257.)

(16.) Etymology, although not of controlling importance in spelling, is decorous; it is interesting and valuable, and to a certain degree instructive. (Page 147.)

(17.) Phonetic spelling reform is no new discovery

or "movement," but is centuries old, and notwithstanding the learning, the ingenuity, and the labor of its advocates it has always failed. (Page 150.)

(18.) The sounds to be expressed by phonetic writing are quite indeterminable. (Pages 179, 195, 199.)

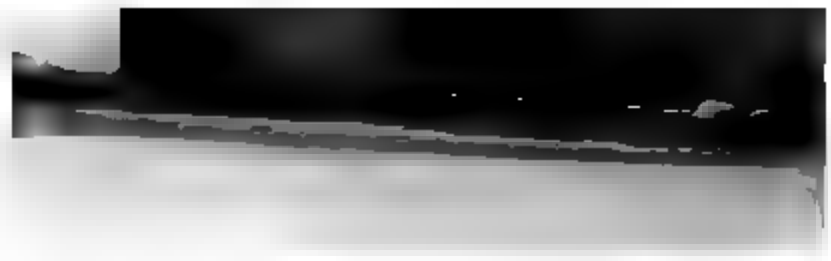
(19.) Letters once silent have in numerous and various instances, including whole classes of words, been restored to sound. This might be done again, and should not be hindered. (Page 244.)

(20.) The ablest, most learned, and most experienced of spelling reformers in his last publication confesses, after a life given to the work, that the more he endeavors after a phonetic spelling the greater the difficulties he finds in his way. (Page 216.)

Therefore we may safely infer and conclude that, —

(21.) A revolution in English spelling is unnecessary, and is not called for by the mass of the intelligent English-speaking and English-reading people, and is practically impossible. Any attempt to introduce phonetic spelling into literature on an extended scale would result only in anarchy, confusion, and disaster, which would be temporary, indeed, but grave and deplorable.

GRAMMAR.



CHAPTER XVII.

LISH GRAMMAR," SO CALLED. WHAT GRAMMAR IS.

H, it 's me," said Mr. Squeers, "and me 's the person singular, nominative case, agreeing with rb it 's, and governed by Squeers understood; scorn, a hour; but when the *h* is sounded, the y is to be used, as a 'and, a 'art, a 'ighway." delicious passage is highly overcharged, like all of its author's writing, but nevertheless is f life and truth. The reason of its being so exly laughable is not because of its representa- the ignorance of the school-master, the union pedagogue and the ignoramus having been presented before, but because it calls up so y the vague, confused memories left in most by the study of that absurd and utterly useless ch" of education, English grammar.

What a laugh

eers's speech is constructed with admirable art. blunder in the person and case of *me*, the makhe noun agree with the verb, and the confused nce to *it 's* as a verb, — the single syllable really ining the verb *is*, — make a ridiculous muddle, ; but all this would have failed of its present without the introduction of that sage and mys- formula of "parsing" which completes the is, "and governed by Squeers understood." limax is capped by the "as" and the introduc- in the manner of grammarians, of an example

which is entirely from the purpose, and which is not only confused and erroneous, but, with all its absurdity, so characteristic an example of the style of illustration in English grammar, that every person who has been put through the bewildering discipline of that study recognizes on the instant the condition of his own mind at some period of his pupilage. Dickens is the great master of this sort of word caricature, — that which represents a confused recollection of facts and an inconsequent, disconnected succession of thoughts. Shakespeare touched this, of course, as he touched everything. But he did it merely by the way, in passing. Dickens lays himself out on it, elaborates it, and rises with it to the height of the ridiculous, — in Mrs. Gamp, for instance, and Flora, in "Little Dorrit."

I believe that I have not overstated the case in saying that Mr. Squeers's amazing effort in parsing is a mere caricature of the impression left upon most minds by the study of English grammar. I know that there are some persons who have not yet written English grammars, — the existing number of which, however, shows that a very large proportion of the English-speaking race must have engaged, at one period or another, in that cheerful occupation, — but who, mute, inglorious Lindley Murrays and Goold Browns, do believe that to speak and write "good grammar" is the highest attainable point in education, and to whom a sentence, albeit uttered by the Supreme Wisdom amid thunderings and lightnings, is chiefly something that may be parsed. But these people are specialists, and partake of the insanity that pertains to specialism. Those who I expect will agree with me are the mass of intelligent people to

whom language is merely the means of communicating facts and thoughts.

I have called the contrivance known as English grammar absurd, and the study of it a useless study; and I verily and soberly believe both these assertions to be true. The absurdity of the contrivance was shown in "Words and their Uses;" the uselessness of the study may appear by what follows. I believe that the effect of the study of English grammar, so called, is to cramp the free action of the mind; to bewilder and confuse where it does not enfeeble and formalize; to pervert the perception of the true excellence of English speech; and, in brief, to substitute the sham of a dead form for the reality of a living spirit.

The question, What is grammar? is oftener asked now than it used to be; for the old definition fails to satisfy many people, — most, indeed, of those who think upon the subject. But this question, in its bare and simple form, is almost as hard to answer as jesting Pilate's. One answer which has been given with great confidence by more than one writer on language is that "grammar is a statement of *the facts* of a language." Truly a somewhat expansive definition, and, I venture to say, one that is sorely enfeebled with vagueness. For the facts of a language include all the incidents of its history, — its origin, its formation, its development, the fleeting usages, both verbal and constructive, in past centuries, as well as the best usage of the present, and so forth, and so forth. There is nothing in regard to language which this definition will not cover. It means so much that, in my judgment, it practically means

As to the word "grammar," it has no limited, absolute meaning. It must be accepted in the sense in which it is used by any writer whose abilities are respectable enough to make his views worthy of consideration. It was formerly used to mean not only the art, so called, of reading and writing correctly, but all the arts of which language was the medium, — rhetoric, poetry, tragic composition, and elocution. Cicero uses it (in "De Finibus" and "De Oratore") to mean philology in the widest sense known in his time. These senses are at once narrower and wider than that of the definition given above. They do not include the history of a language, but they do include literary arts, to which that definition does not apply.

Let us see what some highly distinguished writers upon language mean when they use the word grammar. Turning only to such books as are within my reach as I write, I find the following definitions: Lilly, in his Latin grammar, which was almost exclusively used in England for nearly three centuries (my copy is dated 1621), and from which Shakespeare quotes in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," says, "*Grammatica est rectè scribendi atque loquendi ars*," of which Murray's well-known definition is merely an English version. Making a skip of three hundred years, and turning, for the moment, to Professor Whitney's "Essentials of English Grammar," we have as its first dictum, "Grammar is that branch of knowledge which teaches the art of speaking correctly." Truly, this notion has held its own well through the lapse of centuries. But the distinguished Yale professor goes on to say (rightly, in my opinion, as I need hardly tell my readers) that,

roperly speaking, it [grammar] includes only ety-
logy and **syntax.**" [1]

In the first thoroughly historical, analytical, and,
to speak, philological Latin grammar published
the English language, Roby's "Grammar of the
in Language, from Plautus to Suetonius," the au-
r says, with emphasis, "Now, first, by grammar I
an an orderly arrangement of the facts which con-
n the *form* of a language." It will be observed
t he does not limit this definition to any one lan-
ge or group of languages. Madvig, the Copen-
gen professor, whose Latin grammar is in the hands
all scholars, says that "Latin grammar teaches
form of Latin words and their combination in
tences."

Dr. Morris, the eminent English scholar and editor,
ely president of the British Philological Society,
s in his short English grammar that "grammar
s about the words which make up a language;"
d in his principal work on this subject, the "His-
ical Outlines of the English Language," that
rammar treats of the words of which language is
posed, and of the laws by which it is governed."
fessor Maetzner, the Colossus, the Briareus, the
gus, of English grammarians, says, "Grammar, or
doctrine of language, treats of the laws of speech,
d in the first place of *the word*, as its fundamental
stituent with respect to its *matter* and its *form*;
prosody, or the doctrine of sounds, and in *mor-
logy*, or the doctrine of forms, and then of the
bination of words in speech; in *syntax*, or the
trine of the joining of words and sentences."

Finally, Dr. Alexander Bain, professor in Aber

[1] See *Words and their Uses*, page 277.

deen University, whose "Higher English Grammar" is of well-established repute, in the companion to that work wholly abandons the attempt to define grammar, saying, "Although we might be expected at the outset to define the scope or province of the subject itself, we are precluded from doing so by the neglect of grammarians to observe a clear line of distinction between grammar and the allied departments, — philology on one hand, and rhetoric on the other." Further on, however, he gives, incidentally, but very clearly, his notion of grammar in the following passage: "The defining of parts of speech is a serious affair. The whole fabric of grammar rests upon the classifying of words according to their functions in the sentence."

Certainly here is no lack of variety of view as to the functions of grammar. But all of these eminent writers, who leave the generality as to speaking and writing correctly, agree that grammar concerns forms and construction; and Professor Whitney, the latest and one of the ablest of them, limits it by those boundaries. It is only that I may protect myself against the charge of adopting his views and setting them forth as my own that I mention, what many of my readers well know, that I expressed the same view some years before the publication of Professor Whitney's "Essentials." This is a small matter; but it is not too small to be brought forward now, as I am about to give my own definition of grammar, as follows: —

Grammar concerns the forms of words and their dependent relations in the sentence.

It will be observed that here grammar is not defined as a science, or as an art, or even as a thing.

For I believe grammar to be neither a science nor an art; and as to its being a thing I am somewhat puzzled. A grammar book is a thing; a treatise on grammar is a thing; but grammar itself, in the abstract, — what is it? It cannot correctly be said even to be a record of usage or of so-called law. The grammar is not the record or the treatise; it is the sum total of the usage and the so-called law which is recorded or discussed.

However this may be, I have never pretended to consider grammar from any other point of view than that which is presented in my definition; and that, I venture to say, is the one from which it is regarded, not only by such eminent writers on language as those whom I have cited, but by educated and intelligent people generally, when they speak of good grammar and bad grammar. I cannot justly be gauged by any other measure. Now, it is this grammar, that which concerns the forms of words and their dependent relations in the sentence, that, excepting a trifling and almost inappreciable residuum, I have declared has died out of the English language. And it has died out because the forms of words upon which it depended departed long ago. With a minimum of exception in pronouns, in one case of nouns, and a few persons and numbers of verbs, *English words have but one form*.

Now, where words have not varying forms indicative of their various relations, a grammar which is dependent upon those relations is obviously impossible. And it is only such a grammar that admits of those requirements of agreement and government and what not which have been imposed upon English by mistaken scholars. It is such grammar that has so

weighed down our poor beparsed English-speaking people that when their freedom was proclaimed a few years ago, and a man in whom some of them put some trust dared to tell them that they might fling off their incubus in the name of great Common Sense, from every country where English is spoken there came back to him cries of relief and utterances of hearty thanks, which have not yet quite died away.

A view of grammar which demands attention because, although partial, it is correct as far as it goes, has been thus presented: —

"The office of the grammarian is to state what the language *is*, and to know what the language is he must learn what is the established usage of the best writers and speakers. If he should find it to be the established usage among the best writers and speakers to use the form *I is*, he would have to state the fact; and the statement would form a 'rule' in grammar."

This is the old doctrine: usage is law in language. To a certain extent it is sound doctrine. For in language we must conform to usage whether we will or not. We speak to be understood; and if we use words with which our hearers are unacquainted, or constructions to which they are not accustomed, we speak to them more or less in an unknown tongue. But usage is not all the law of language. There is in every language a normal speech. Reason has some sway even in so arbitrary an exercise of the mind as the use of words. It is possible to believe that *I is* might be good English; because *am* and *is* express existence under the same condition of time; and indeed it would be much better now to say *I is* than to speak of "predicating" an action upon a fact: for the one would be a mere disregard of one

e scraps and remnants of English grammar, would not in any way obscure the speaker's ng; the other is ridiculous nonsense. But it is impossible to suppose that, for example, *I gone* be good English, unless upon the assumption *one* had another meaning as to time than that it has now, — an assumption futile and not of consideration, because it supposes language ly subverted, as if the word *rose* should mean phant, or the word *bread* a stone, and so forth. is a statement of the usage of the best writers a law in language, although it may be called by grammarians. For instance, that use of the grammarians call the perfect infinitive, of "he would have liked to have gone" is an ple, is illogical, or, in simpler, blunter phrase, nsical. But I having pointed this out, a gram-n, a great stickler for English grammar, de-d at the term illogical, and in his criticism said he had before him "a work which treats of the point" in question, and that this use "is shown ungrammatical." Now, if it is ungrammatical, t be so because it is in defiance of a "rule," as we have seen is a statement of "the usage best writers." But so far is this use of the t infinitive from being in opposition to such a hat, on the contrary, it strictly conforms to that of the best writers upon which the grammarians rules are founded. I would undertake to show, any penalty that might be imposed upon me, he construction in question has been in common onstant use with the best writers in English ture from the Elizabethan period to the present Therefore, according to the grammarians them-

selves, "he would have liked to have gone" is not ungrammatical; it is merely illogical, or nonsensical.

Moreover, in this definition, so commonly given that grammar is a methodical setting forth of the usage of the best writers, there is a term which itself needs defining, — usage. Their usage as to what? This phrase, "usage of the best writers," etc., like the other, "the facts of a language," is very vague. Does it mean usage as to signification of words? That is very important; but no one nowadays regards such usage as a part of grammar. Is it usage as to the form of sentences, that is, whether they shall be long or short, direct or inverted, and so forth? That is matter of taste; it belongs to æsthetics, to what is called rhetoric, as I am sure the very grammarians would admit. The usage which makes grammar being neither usage as to the meaning of words nor usage as to the rhetorical form of speech, it can therefore be only usage as to the relations of words, as words, in the sentence.

Now the relations of words, irrespective of their meaning and of the taste with which they are used, must depend on their forms; and a relation of form implies inflection for the sake of conformity. This does not exist in the English language. Upon the absence of this essential part of formal grammar I have remarked heretofore in "Words and their Uses," and I shall refer to the subject again in a subsequent chapter.

To an objection which has been made, that my protest against English grammar is merely a matter of terms, and that what I call illogical other people call ungrammatical, I have only to say that what I call illogical other people may call ungrammatical,

or pharisaical, or pragmatical, or hyperbolical, or anything else they choose to call it; and if it is illogical their calling will make no difference; if it is not, what I say will fall to the ground. Let that pass; I remark upon it only for the sake of the following illustration: Some two or three years ago a highly-gifted and equally well-instructed lady, a German, wrote to me, asking a question as to English usage. Besides being an accomplished German scholar, she was instructed in Latin and Greek, and wrote English with rare idiomatic grace and force. I replied to her question — a very simple one — just as any English scholar to whom she might have written must have replied. In her answer she wrote, "This seems to me rather a lesson in logic than in grammar." She was right. Grammar this accomplished and thoughtful person found in Greek, in Latin, and in German; in English she found, and could find, little else than logic.

Formal grammar is at war with common-sense; and I repeat that by formal grammar I mean that system of language which constructs sentences upon the correspondence of the forms of words, or, where there are no forms or few, upon the imaginary relations of words, instead of the logical order of thought. But in saying that grammar is at war with common-sense, I do not mean that it is inconsistent with sense in writing. By common-sense we mean that faculty of perceiving the practical relations of things which is the best guide through life, and which may exist in an uninstructed and very commonplace mind, and be entirely lacking in one which is stored with learning or gifted with creative genius. This faculty exists in a greater degree in some races than in others. The

Anglo-Saxon race are distinguished by it; they are preëminently a people of common-sense. This is one reason why they, more than any other people, have discarded formal grammar.

The fact that formal grammar is at war with common-sense is shown by the history of language. It might naturally be supposed that with the advancement of civilization and the perfection of literary skill grammar would become more elaborate, if not more complicated; that as life became more complex and society more polished, language, the chief means of intellectual development and social progress, would, with equal steps, become more complex and elaborated. The contrary is the case. The further we go back in the history of the world, the more complex we find language, the more minutely varied and numerous are the forms of words, the more elaborate is the construction of the sentence. The grammar of the oldest written language known — the Sanskrit — is of all grammars the most complicated, and the rivals of Sanskrit in this respect are the languages of some utterly barbarous peoples. The supply of grammar before the time of the Tower of Babel must have been something quite inconceivable at the present day. As the world has advanced it has gradually laid aside the unessential in language; it has dropped forms of words which expressed minute shades of meaning as to time and other relations, and has accomplished, by simpler methods, the ends for which those forms were made, the change always being destructive of formal grammar.

All languages, living or dead, show in their history the progress of this change; but it appears most in

the Anglo-Saxon or English language, in which formal grammar might be said to have entirely disappeared, but for a very small number of "survivals," which are to be found in a few forms of pronouns and verbs. In this the distinguishing common-sense of the English race is eminently apparent. It is not certain that this deformalizing of the English language has yet reached its end (for example, the subjunctive mood is almost gone, the adverb is beginning to yield place to the adjective, and the distinction between *who* and *whom* seems to be disappearing, and I believe will disappear). The retention of the few syntactical forms which it preserves at present may be due, on the one hand, to a common-sense view of their practical usefulness, or, on the other, in pronouns at least, to the immobility of those most ancient and unchanged of all the elements of language.

The uselessness of the study of what is called English grammar is shown by the fact that none of the great writers and speakers of English, before the present century at least, were at all instructed in that — by pedagogues — much-vaunted "branch" of education. Our great poets, philosophers, statesmen, orators, — men whose words are the glory and the priceless heritage of the English race, and whose use of language we feebly emulate — knew nothing of English grammar. Is there any use in teaching a method of speaking and writing the English language correctly that was utterly unknown to Chaucer, Spenser, Sidney, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Bacon, Fletcher, Milton, Pope, Dryden, Locke, Addison, Steele, Fielding, Goldsmith, Sterne, Burke, Johnson, and to the English translators of the Bible? And what English short of that of Shake-

speare and the English Bible is to be compared with John Bunyan's' — a man ignorant not only of English grammar, but of any grammar at all.

I have stopped in the citation of my examples with the writers of the last century merely because, in regard to those of the present, I am less sure about their schoolboy experience in learning their mother tongue, and because it was not long before the beginning of this century that the English-grammar plague broke out. But that mental malady has never raged much in England, at least among those who receive the higher education; and it is probable at least that Walter Scott, Byron, Wordsworth, Southey, Macaulay, Carlyle, and Thackeray received no special instruction in English grammar.

This assertion may surprise some who know that "grammar schools" have long been established in England. They have existed there for centuries, — from the time of Edward VI. at least. There was a grammar school at Stratford-on-Avon, to which Shakespeare probably went. But these grammar schools had nothing to do with English grammar. The grammar that they taught was the Latin grammar. Then "grammar" meant, without more words, Latin grammar. The generation that produced Shakespeare and Bacon and the translators of the Bible would as soon have thought of setting up schools to teach young ducks to swim, as a school to teach English boys the art of speaking and writing the English language correctly. In "The Merry Wives of Windsor" Shakespeare makes the clergyman, Sir Hugh Evans, ask little William Page some questions in "his accidence," at the request of his mother, who says that his father complains that he "profits noth-

ing in the world at his book;" and his accidence is Latin, his book, simply his Latin grammar.[1] The men whom Jack Cade tells Lord Say it will be proved to his face he has about him, and who "usually talk of a noun and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear," talked only of Latin nouns and verbs.

The first English grammar that I am acquainted with was written by Ben Jonson, who wrote it, I believe, after Shakespeare's time, and left it unfinished. After that there were various English grammars written, but they were not for the use of schools. Knowledge of the construction of language was obtained in England, until a very recent period, only through the medium of the Latin grammar or the Greek. Reynolds the dramatist, who wrote in London in the latter part of the last century and the beginning of this, tells us in his autobiography that at Westminster school he "studied the Latin but never the English grammar."

"America" has been the great field of labor in English grammar; and the first great English grammar, the one by which school-boydom has been chiefly oppressed, was written by an "American," Lindley

[1] I have been asked if the study of Latin does not teach English grammar. No, except in so far as there must be some relation between all languages, because they are all varieties of human speech. It does not: first, for the all-sufficient and never-too-often-to-be-repeated reason that there is no English grammar to be taught; next, because the Latin language and the English are diametrically unlike in their structure, and you cannot teach the construction or the use of one thing by training a pupil to the construction and the use of another altogether different. Indeed, it has been the curse of the teaching of English by grammars and by schoolmasters in the last seventy-five years or more and particularly in "America," that the methods, the spirit, and the terminology of Latin syntax have been transferred and applied to the English tongue. As well might a horse undertake to teach an eagle to fly, or a dolphin to swim.

Murray, the Philadelphia Quaker. The i
this book and its imitations in our count
been happy. Our English has suffered fro
have produced some writers who use the E
guage with freedom and inborn mastery;
mass of our free-and-independent, public-
cated "American" citizens would, I beli
written better and spoken better, more
easily, forcibly, idiomatically, if English
books had been unknown.

CHAPTER XVIII.

W IT IS THAT ENGLISH HAS NO GRAMMAR.

MONG the eminent writers of English who were rly untaught in English grammar is one whom I merely mentioned by name, but whose position terature has a peculiar and impressive signifi- e in connection with our present subject. This ir Philip Sidney. Sidney is one of the great ers of the early period of modern English; mod- English having formed itself only in the genera- before that in which he lived, and having since modified in no particular that is essential, im- ant, or even remarkable. Elizabeth, whose chief ne, whose almost only virtue, was that she knew a when she found him, called Sidney "the jewel er times;" and well she might so call him. He simply the highest-minded, truest-hearted, and accomplished English gentleman of his period. was a writer, although not so by profession. He te — as Raleigh and other gentlemen and noble- of that time wrote — with no other object than expression of thought and feeling, or the accom- ment of some purpose. His romance "Arcadia" dious reading to us of nowadays, and I am not that it was not tedious to those for whom it written. It went indeed through many editions he course of a century, but romances then were e, and some of them were very much longer and h more tedious than Sidney's.

The tediousness, however, which makes the "Arcadia" now unreadable, except as a study in English literature, does not at all depend upon the English in which it is written, — than which nothing could be better. Its style is quaint, formal, antiquated, and prolix, but this was a mere consequence of the fashion of the day, — a fashion which prevailed chiefly, if not only, in prose. It did not appear in Sidney's poetry, for Sidney, although he did not set up as a poet, was one. In this very "Arcadia" is the following sonnet, which is not only for its thought one of the most beautiful in our literature, but is also remarkable for its fine idiomatic use of English: —

> "With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies,
> How silently, and with how wan a face!
> What, may it be, that even in heavenly place
> That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?
> Sure, if that long-with-love-acquainted eyes
> Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case;
> I read it in thy looks; thy languished grace
> To me that feel the like thy state discries.
> Then, even of fellowship, O Moon, tell me
> Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?
> Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
> Do they above love to be loved, and yet
> Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
> Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?" [1]

Then there is another, beginning, —

> "Come, sleep, O sleep! the certain knot of peace,
> The baiting place of wit, the balm of woe,
> The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
> The indifferent judge between the high and low."

The man who wrote these verses wrote in the great English; English which is not of a time or a period, which has no fashion, old or new, but which is for all time.

[1] As to the construction and meaning of the last line, see *Words and their Uses*, page 291.

But Sidney's most celebrated literary performance
is "Apology for Poetry." This essay is remarka-
as being the first critical essay worthy of the name
our literature. And not only is it the first, but it
ains to the present day one of the very best. It
etimes happens that the man who conceives a
g, and produces the first of its kind, attains
ein an excellence which may afterward be ri-
d, but will hardly be surpassed. There is to this
no more beautiful printing than that which came
the first printing-office in the world; and Gas-
da Salo, who made the first real violin, wrought
pon a model to which, after years of deviation,
art returned in the hands of that skillful and judi-
s workman, Stradivarius.

In Sidney's "Apology for Poetry," moreover, there
passage which has a direct bearing on the sub-
of pretended English grammar. Sidney, like all
n of his time, and of more than a century follow-
was entirely uninstructed in English grammar;
then, as I have before said, no English grammar
been written; none was taught in grammar
ools, and the English language itself was looked
on with scorn by professed men of letters, and
htingly called the vulgar tongue, — meaning the
gue of the common people. The passage to which
efer is the following. Speaking of English, he
s: —

"I know some will say it is a mingled language. And
not so much the better, taking the best of both the
? Another will say that it wanteth [lacks] grammer.
, truly, it hath that praise that it wanteth not [does not
] grammer; for grammer it might have, but it needes
not; being so easie of itselfe, and so voyd of those cum

bersome differences of cases, genders, moodes, and tenses, which I think was a peece of the Tower of Babilon's curse that a man should be put to schoole to learne his mother tongue. But for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceits of the minde, which is the end of speech, that hath it equally with any other tongue in the world; and is particularly happy in compositions of two or three words together, neere the Greeke, far beyond the Latine, which is one of the greatest beauties can be in a language."

The "Apology for Poetry" was published in 1595, and here we have the recognition nearly three hundred years ago of the fact in philology that English is a grammarless tongue. Sidney says, it "wanteth," that is, it lacks, grammar; and not only so, but with a clear and admirable insight he says that it "hath that *praise* that it wanteth not grammar," that is, has no need of grammar. He saw that in its lack of grammar was the glory and the strength of the English language, as well as its easy fitness to the every-day uses of common men. There is no other such language in the world, nor has there ever been such a language. Sidney goes on to say why it is that English has no grammar: that it is because it is "void of those cumbersome differences of cases, genders, moods, and tenses" And then he puts the English common-sense view of the subject, that "it was a piece of the Tower of Babylon's curse that a man should be *put to school to learn his mother tongue*." How little a man needed such schooling to use his mother tongue with clearness, with strength, and with expression, Sidney showed in this very essay, the "Apology for Poetry," and in various passages of his other writings. Entirely apart from the poetical beauty of the thought, in the verses quoted above

will any one venture to say that such a use of English can be taught by daily parade in school, according to the tactics of those drill-masters in language, Lindley Murray and Goold Brown, or even William Cobbett?[1]

The reason, therefore, why English has no grammar is that it is uncumbered with cases, genders, moods, and tenses, and, we may almost say, with grammatical person. For these are the essence of grammar, or rather, I should say, its conditions; without them there can be no grammar. When people say good grammar and bad grammar, they refer only to the forms of words and the construction of sentences.

Grammar has to do with the correct form and correlation of words. But in English there is no form, and consequently no correlation dependent upon form that has any noteworthy influence upon the construction of the sentence. Let candid objectors wait a little before they spring up to reply. I said "noteworthy influence," meaning by this phrase to allow for certain small remnants of grammar which are to be found in the English language.

For English had once a grammar. When the English-speaking people were rude, ignorant, savage, and heathen, without literature, without any semblance of fine art, knowing little even of the useful arts, living in hovels, tilling the ground in the rudest manner, and

[1] This passage of Sidney's I had either entirely forgotten, or had never observed until after the publication not only of my essay, *The Grammarless Tongue*, but of the first edition of *Words and their Uses*. In the second, I gladly found myself under the necessity of recognizing (as I did in the preface to that edition) that in these few lines I had had an illustrious predecessor in what not only most others, but even I myself, had regarded as a peculiar view (and it certainly was an original view) of the English language.

having a money price for man's life, their language had a grammar which surpassed in complexity that of the Romans, and almost equaled that of the Greeks. But as they became civilized they rid themselves of this complexity; and when they had reached the point at which they were about to produce a Bacon and a Shakespeare, they had, to all intents and purposes, freed themselves from it entirely. Not that civilization was the direct agent in producing this result, which was due to several causes, the enumeration of which is not to our present purpose, but that the gradual casting aside of the trammels of grammar did accompany advancement in civilization, and in particular did accompany the development of English literature into the splendors of the Elizabethan era. Therefore, it need hardly be said, this absence of grammar is in no way inconsistent with intellectual development or with the highest form of literary expression. Indeed, as I have mentioned before, this simplification of verbal forms and this doing away of the correlation that depends upon those forms, or, in other words, the laying aside of grammar, seems to be a tendency of language. But in no other language has this tendency been so strong and so overpowering as in English.

Of the complex grammar which once entangled the speakers of English there remain a few vestiges, such as some of the philosophers of the present day have chosen to call "survivals," but which, it seems to me, might better be called survivors. Whoever will observe will see that in all the examples given by the followers of Lindley Murray to show that the English language has grammar, the writers use pronouns. The reason for this is that they could use no other

words. They are driven to *I*, and *me*, and *him*, and *her*, and *whom*. For our pronouns and two or three verbal forms are the last refuge of the once dominant and all-pervading English grammar. Pronouns *have* nominative cases and objective cases; but nouns have not. But pronouns are so few in number that you may count them on your fingers (those who choose to count them may), whereas nouns are numbered by the tens of thousands, and form, as far as the subject and object of action are concerned, the whole of the language, to all intents and purposes. Could anything be more unreasonable, more inconsistent with English common-sense, than the assumption that because in some half a score of peculiar words there remain vestiges of grammar therefore there is a grammar for the whole language, of which these form hardly an appreciable part?

At the risk of repeating what must be known, or once have been known, to many of my readers, I must remark that, according to the grammarians, a simple sentence is composed of two parts, the subject and the predicate. The grammatical subject is the word which expresses the person or thing of which action or existence or enduring is predicated; the predicate is the word which expresses that action, existence, or enduring. Examples of this sort of sentence are, Time flies, God exists, Ireland famishes. But although a subject and a verb are technically a sentence, it seems to me that to the ungrammatical mind the simplest form of a perfect sentence is that in which the verb has an object. The object of the verb is, however, technically a part of the predicate. Thus, in the sentence, Women love children, "women" is the grammatical subject, and the predi-

cate is "love children." In such sentences the verb has been called a copula by some grammarians, a distinction which I cannot bring myself to respect. But however this may be, for our present purpose we have only to consider the fact that in what is known as modern English, this relation of subject, predicate, and object is a purely logical relation, that is, a relation of reason, of thought, and it is indicated chiefly by the succession in which the thoughts are presented. In languages having grammar, which depends upon the relations of words rather than upon those of the thoughts expressed by words, the succession of the words has comparatively little to do with the construction of the sentence, and still less with its meaning. It has been found by English-speaking people that an objective form or case of the noun, differencing it from the nominative, is altogether unnecessary for the indication of its objective condition, that is, to show that it is the object of action. We know just as well when we say "Women love children" that it is meant that children are the object of women's love as if the word "children" had a form peculiar to the expression of this objective relation; that is, as if it were in the objective case.[1]

In languages that have grammar there are other cases, which express by the forms of words senses and relations which in English are expressed by little words which the grammarians have named prepositions. There is the dative case, which expresses what in English we express by prefixing "to" or "for" to the noun. But we also do without the preposition, particularly in the case of pronouns. Even

[1] I must here again refer the reader to Chapters IX. and X. of *Words and their Uses*.

then, however, although we drop the preposition, we do not assume a case form. For example, "I gave it him," that is, to him; "I got her a doll," that is, for her; and Desdemona's exclamation, which, to use her father's phrase, "made her half the wooer," when she told Othello that "she wished that heaven had made her such a man," that is, had made for her such a man.[1] The order, Boil me an egg, does not indicate that the speaker is an unhatched chicken crying out to be cooked; nor in reading 1 Kings xiii. 13, "And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass," is the emphasis warranted, in the next sentence, "So they saddled *him*," etc. One English grammarian, whose perceptions have carried him beyond the point of an objective case "governed by *for* understood," but no further, declares that in such sentences we have examples of an English dative case. "In what case is the pronoun," he asks, "if not in the dative?" In no case at all, most excellent grammarian. There is simply a dative sense expressed by the meaning of the words and by their order. When shall we be rid of this notion that an English noun must be in some case? There is the ablative case, the sense of which we express by prefixing *with*, *in*, *from*, or *by* to the noun. These prepositions, however, cannot

[1] In a criticism of this chapter on its first publication, the following question was asked with sarcastic triumph: "Does the author of *Shakespeare's Scholar* really think that Desdemona was guilty (or so represented) of the inaccuracy of saying to the Moor 'she wished that heaven had made *for* her such a man'?" If my censor had read the book which he uses to barber his shaft, he would know that the construction of the passage at which he scoffs was therein elaborately set forth as the only one admissible; and the manner of his presenting the subject would excuse my saying that since then (1854) this view of the passage has been generally, if not universally, taken, not only in England and in France, but in Germany. Gervinus says, "With this hint the maiden proffered herself to him." Ed. 1862.)

be omitted in the expression of this sense; the
of which seems to be that the English langu
its earliest form, which some call Anglo-Saxo
some Old English, had a dative case, but no abl
The dative sense in the simple noun after th
is a remnant, a "survival" or survivor, of th
grammar. Thus we say, "I gave Charles an a
that is, I gave *to* Charles, etc.; but we cannot
"I went Charles to church," meaning, I went
Charles, etc. We must use the preposition, a
forefathers used it for centuries. In the other p
we use no preposition, yet we retain the dative
which they indicated by a dative case or form o
noun, which we have found unnecessary. A
in Latin and in Greek there is a form or case o
noun expressive of calling, summoning, appe
named the vocative; but this does not appear
in the earliest form of English. We find wh
say, "Tom, come here!" or call, "Mary! Ma
or demand, "What do you mean, Charles?" t
is not at all necessary to put Tom and Mary
Charles (that is, the words, not the persons) in
culiar form or case. The meaning is perfectly
without a change of form or inflection expres
that sense, which would be a grammatical proce

We have, however, one case in English,
which expresses possession or a relation of perta
This case is called in Latin grammar, and in G
the genitive case; we call it the possessive. I
always existed in English: first with the endi
then *es*, and now (that is, for about the last
hundred years) with a suppression of the vow

[1] We may say, Depart the house, for Depart from the house;
such cases *depart* is used for *leave* or *quit*.

dicated by an apostrophe. Smithas became Smithes, then Smith's. This possessive case is a distinctive trait of English among modern languages. For it is remarkable that the modern Latin or Romanic tongues have no possessive case, although in the Latin — their source — it was one of the most strikingly and strongly-developed forms of the noun and the adjective. In French, Italian, and Spanish the possessive or pertaining idea is expressed by the preposition *de*. Still stranger is it that although this possessive form *as* or *es* is Teutonic, and belongs by inheritance to the whole Teutonic family of languages, in German — one of the oldest and most important of these languages — it is dropped in what is called the modern declension of nouns, and appears only in the genitive of the article, *des*. Some German nouns retain the old normal form of the possessive in the singular, but drop it in the plural.

In English, too, we can use the preposition *of*, corresponding to the Romanic *de*. We can say "the top of the mountain" as well as "the mountain's top." But a Frenchman *must* say *le sommet de la montagne;* and not only so, but he must say *le chapeau de mon fils*, the hat of my boy. This causes a formality and an elaboration of the thought to be conveyed, which loses a simple strength that we have in English, and also adds, to us at least, an incongruity of form with sense which approaches the absurd. As an illustration of the former, suppose that in this splendid passage,

"And jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops,"

Shakespeare had chosen to write "the misty mountain's top," the effect would have been nearly the

same. But suppose that in that case he had been obliged to write "the misty top of the mountain," how much of the elevation and the impressiveness of the passage would have been lost! On the other hand, think of being obliged always to say "the hat of my boy," instead of "my boy's hat"!

This remnant of inflection has not, however, any appreciable effect in strengthening or multiplying the bonds of English grammar. In regard to it there seems nothing necessary to be said but that the inflection of a noun in *es*, or its contraction 's, expresses possession, or pertaining, in regard to the object expressed by the following word or phrase. For the object of possession, or that which pertains, is not necessarily a thing. We may say, "John's hat is black," or "John's going to Washington is unfortunate." In the first case the thing pertaining to John is a material object, a hat; in the last the thing pertaining to him is an act, his going to Washington.

The only real grammatical question raised by the possessive case is that as to the double possessive, as, "that horse of Alexander's," "that bust of Cæsar's." This I pass by at the present, my object now being merely to show to what degree and in what manner English is free from the trammels of grammar.

An objection has been made to the view of English grammar here presented, which is clearly enough put in the question asked by more than one objector, if I intend to take the position that grammar is the same as inflection, or, in the words of one of them, "entirely synonymous" with it. I do not; and the question surprises me. It asks if the cause, or rather the condition, of a thing is identical or "synonymous" with the thing itself. Inflections are not grammar

but grammar is chiefly the consequence of inflections. And here I must remind the reader of the sense in which I use "grammar," which is the common, generally accepted sense, as to which I must refer to former explanations. This difficulty as to the definition of terms is a great obstacle to discussion. I know some very able and mentally well-equipped men who decline discussion altogether, because they say that the first condition of it, exact agreement as to the meaning of essential terms, does not exist, and cannot be brought about without a preliminary discussion, which would postpone the main argument indefinitely. To return to our subject. Grammar in any other sense than that which deals with the relations of words, or, in the phrase of one of my grammarians, "the correct form and correlation of words," we here have nothing to do with. But without inflection, of what constructional importance can the form of words be? and then can words which have but one form have correlation? The obvious answer to both these questions seems to me to be, None. Therefore it is that in English there can be no grammar, or none to all intents and purposes, there being in our language only a few remnants of inflection, and consequently of correlation of words.

As to gender, which is one of the most important elements of this formal grammar, there is not a vestige of it in the English language. English has no gender. There is not an English noun or adjective that has gender. There are, indeed, English words which express distinctions of sex; but sex has nothing to do with grammatical gender. Sex is something that pertains to and distinguishes living things; gender, grammatical gender, belongs to words; not

to the things which the words mean, but to the words themselves. Thus in French *table* is feminine; not that a table is regarded by the French people as having sex; not even that it is personified, as the moon is when we say she rises, but that the word, the combination of letters *t-a-b-l-e*, is in French of the feminine gender, so that *la*, a combination of letters meaning "the," which is also feminine, must be used with it, and to say *le table* (*le* also meaning "the," just as *la* does) is bad grammar. Now in English we say "the man" as well as "the woman," using the same article in both instances, because our words have no gender, even when they express distinctions of sex.[1] And in a Latin sentence every word directly connected with another must be thus adapted to it in form, sometimes of gender, at others of case and person. This is the essential part of grammar, and it is the attempt to transfer the rules and the phrases which pertain to this grammar to our simply formed, but therefore none the less rich and strong, mother tongue that has produced that monstrous hybrid, called English grammar.

In the verb English is almost entirely void, as Sir Philip Sidney said, of moods and tenses, and is hardly less so of number and person. We say, for example, I, you, we, or they *love*; only for the third person singular do we make any difference in the verb,—he, she, or it *loves*. So I, you, we, they *have*; he, she, or it *has*. A like simplicity of structure and sameness of form runs through moods and tenses. The subjunctive mood, which differs a very little from the indicative,

[1] That sex has nothing to do with gender is illustrated by the fact that the Latin word most expressive of the female sex is of the masculine gender.

is passing rapidly out of use. There is no imperative mood; it is the same as the indicative. *Go* is indicative and imperative. It is the connection in which it is used, the tone in which it is spoken, that gives it an indicative or an imperative meaning. In English there is no passive voice. We express passivity, of course, but we do it by making a little sentence. In Latin, which has a passive voice, *amo* the active means I love, and *amor* is the passive, which we express by the sentence, I am loved.

It is needless to follow this line of examination further. I did it in detail twelve years ago and more, and those who care to do so will find two chapters about it in "Words and their Uses." It is sufficiently clear to the reader, I hope, that the English sentence is not constructed upon the forms of words and their correlation. Its construction is purely logical; that is, according to the succession of thought, there being in it, however, a few vestiges of grammar, the usefulness of which is fully proved by the fact of their retention.[1]

[1] Professor Whitney's *Essentials of English Grammar* was published as these chapters were appearing in their original form. It was after their publication that I read this latest English grammar book. So far as the soundness of its teachings goes, it seems to me in almost every particular excellent. (I will say, by the way, that I should not presume to speak in such a tone of approval of anything that Professor Whitney had written on the higher philology.) I do not wonder that Professor Child, of Harvard, than whom there is no more accomplished or ingenious English scholar in the country, says of it, "I do not know that I ever before saw an English grammar which I would permit my children to look into, so great the chance has been that they would learn nothing or be taught something false." Professor Whitney's book does teach and it teaches nothing false, at least of any importance, but what a reproach is Professor Child's commendation upon that system of grammar in favor of which there were up such outcries when I published *The Grammarless Tongue*. But Professor Whitney's book is not a grammar; and he himself plainly does not believe in English grammar, such as we have considered it; nor does he believe in teaching it as it has been taught, or that learning it is

necessary to good English speech or writing. As to which read the passage from his preface, in which I have emphasized some opinions:—

"That the leading object of the study of English grammar is to teach the correct use of English is, in my view, an error, and one which is gradually becoming removed, giving way to the sounder opinion that grammar is the reflective study of language, for a variety of purposes, of which correctness in writing is only one, and a secondary or subordinate one, though by no means unimportant, but *best attained when sought indirectly*. It should be a pervading element in the whole school and home training of the young to make them use their own tongue with accuracy and ease, and, along with any special drilling directed to this end, some of the rudimentary distinctions and rules of grammar are conveniently to be learned; *that is not the study of grammar*, and it will not bear the intrusion of much formal grammar *without being spoiled for its own ends*. It is constant use and practice, under never-failing watch and correction that makes good writers and speakers; the application of direct authority is the most efficient corrective. Grammar has its part to contribute, but rather in the higher than in the lower stages of the work. One must be a somewhat reflective user of language to amend even here and there a point by grammatical reasons, and *no one ever changed from a bad speaker to a good one by applying the rules of grammar to what he said*."

This gives up the whole question. The reflective study of language which does not concern itself with rudimentary distinctions or with rules, and which does not change a bad speaker to a good one, may be, and indeed is, a very valuable and interesting study, but it is not what the school-teacher or the school-boy means by learning grammar. The reflective study of language, too, is an exercise of the mind, than which there is none which more requires natural ability and the high training which comes of discipline. It is a study far beyond the capacity of the pupils at our public schools and academies, into whose hands even Professor Whitney's *Essentials* might better not be put.

As to gender and verb forms he has on the next page the following remarks, which present briefly but substantially the same views of the subject which I have already given:

"The ordinary method with gender in nouns, for example, which was really an imposition upon English of a system of distinctions belonging elsewhere, has been abandoned in favor of one that is both truer and far simpler. The sharp distinction, again, of the verb-phrases or compound forms from the real verb-forms seems to me a matter of no small importance if the study of the construction of sentences is to be made a reality."

CHAPTER XIX.

...TS OF SPEECH. — DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEARNING GERMAN AND LEARNING ENGLISH.

...NE trait of the English language is the great ...bility, not to say looseness, of its structure in re... to what are called the parts of speech. In this ...pect it is, as in others, nearly unique among the ...guages of the civilized world. English may almost ...aid to have no distinctive parts of speech. This ... strong putting of the case, I admit; but it ex...es the truth more nearly than it could be ex...ed without a long and carefully-elaborated state...t. The principal parts of speech are the noun, ... verb, the adjective, and that peculiar sort of word ...h by grammarians has been strangely called the ...oun, about which I shall say something hereafter. ...h these words sentences can be formed; and with... any others we could speak and write, and attain ... or nearly all, the great ends of language. True, ... speech would be clumsy, the forms of our thought ...kish, compared with what they are now; but we ...d speak of the necessary things of daily life, and ...municate intelligibly upon almost any subject.

...ow, the fact is that these principal parts of speech ... so interchangeable in our mother tongue that ...y can hardly be said to be distinguished from each ...er. In English, almost any simple noun may be ...d as a verb without change in its form; and in ... manner almost any verb may be used as a noun.

Nouns are used as adjectives, and adjectives as nouns. Pronouns may be used, and are used, as nouns, as adjectives, and even as verbs. We wire a message, we table a resolution, we foot our way home, a hunter treés a bear, a broker bears stock or bulls it, the merchant ships his goods, the hypocrite cloaks his sins with acted falsehood, the invalid suns himself, the east wind clouds the sky. We thus constantly use, and for centuries have used, as verbs words which originally were nouns. On the other hand, we speak of the run of a ship, of a great haul of fish, of a horse coming in on the jump, of a man being on the go, of a great rush of people, of the push of business, of the thrust of the rafters of a house, of the spring and fall, and so on, using verbs as nouns. We cannot speak of the right and the wrong, the good and the bad, the strong and the weak, without using adjectives as nouns; for the pretense of the elder grammarians that a qualified noun is understood in these cases is unfounded, and was made only for the sake of keeping up the make-believe of grammar. And as to using nouns as adjectives, we cannot speak of a gold watch, an iron bar, a bar-room, a carpet-bag, a carpet knight, a brick house, a stone bridge, or a windmill, without doing that. It is the commonest conversion of parts of speech. We could hardly communicate in English without it. And it is not because in the phrases "lady friend" and "gentleman friend" a noun is used as an adjective that they are so offensive, — at least to some people. When we say a brew-house, a wash-house, or a turnstile, we use verbs as adjectives. As to pronouns, "he" and "she" are constantly used as adjectives, as, a he goat, a she animal. Pepys writes of his

"she cousin." Of the use of "she" as a noun in the sense of woman, English poetry of all times is full. "The fair, the chaste, the unexpressive she," in "As You Like It," is one of a thousand like instances. Shakespeare also uses "thou" as a verb: "If thou thou'st him," that is, if thou say'st "thou" to him; and we nowadays say that Friends "thee and thou" us. Indeed, this convertibility of the parts of speech is so characteristic of the English language that I found this sentence in a London magazine: "Here are the *whereons* to make your fortune,"—an adverb being used as a noun. The example is not one which I should hold up for imitation; but it is in the normal line of English speech development, which tends to the obliteration of the *formal* distinction of parts of speech. Under what circumstances this distinction shall be disregarded is a question of taste, to be decided by the speaker or writer at his own peril. In the following passage from a speech by a Cavalier commander in the Great Rebellion is an instance quite as striking as that just cited above, but far more successful: "But when you have come to the puritanical towns Taunton, Crewkerne, Bristol, Dorchester, and Exeter, then let your swords *cruel it* without difference of sex, age, or condition." (Lord Paulet's speech at Sherborne, September 7, 1642, *apud* Wallington, ii. 92.) Here we have an adjective used as a verb most happily.[1]

It has been objected to this theory of the English language that it refutes itself, and that every language must have parts of speech, without which in-

[1] It is proper to say that the correctness of the report of this speech was denied by Lord Paulet and his friends; but that is not to our present purpose.

telligible sentences could not be constructed; without which, indeed, there could not be language. True enough this, in a certain sense. If it is meant that the words in an English sentence express object, subject, act, quality, etc., including all the modes of making, modifying, extending, or limiting an assertion, who could dissent? Certainly not I. But if it is meant that there are certain words the meaning of which is limited to some one of these functions, and that such words are definitely certain parts of speech, so that it may be told whether they are verbs, nouns, or adjectives, without knowing the connection in which they are used, as it may in other languages, then I dissent and deny. Nor can I believe that any intelligent and competently instructed critic would attempt to maintain such a theory of English parts of speech after giving the subject due consideration. For example: *Love* in English corresponds to both *amor* and *amo* in Latin, and to *amour* and *aime* in French. *Man* is a noun, meaning a human male (*homo*, *homme*); and it is a verb, as, to man a ship, for which in Latin and French there must be periphrasis; and it is an adjective, as man child, man rope, a use of the word impossible in Latin or in French. *Amor* and *amo*, *amour* and *aime*, are respectively noun and verb in Latin and French; but what is *love*? *Homo* and *homme* are, respectively, a part of speech, a noun; but what is *man*? You cannot tell whether *love* or *man* is noun, verb, or adjective until you see it in a sentence. The illustrations of this fact in English are countless.

This comparative freedom not only from rules, but from limitations, — from the bonds even of terminology, — makes English a language radically different.

ll others. It may be learned, must be learned, other language can be learned by one not born ed to speak it. I am reminded of this by the of a business man who asks me how he shall out to learn the German language. A strange this to make of me; for I have undertaken to tell my readers, so far as I can do so, some- about the English language; and, in general, I acquaintance only with my mother tongue, — , with any approach to thoroughness. I would help this business man, if I were able to do I am not. Let us see how the case stands. ding to his own representation of it, he is thirty old; he has little time for study, and he wishes German, the most complex of the languages to modern literature, without learning the f its complex construction. He thinks, also, would not advise him to commit the main rules rman grammar to memory; and for a very e reason, — because he is unused and inapt to work. On the contrary, this is the very rea- hy he, hoping to learn German at all, should himself thoroughly acquainted with the laws of ymology and its syntax, should learn them by , and have them ready for application at any nt.

this correspondent will only give himself the le to be born once more, and become as a little , and if he will so order the preliminaries that nteresting event shall happen in Germany, and will thereafter live in Germany for a dozen or re of years, he may then learn German so as to it fluently and read it easily, without learning mmar. The German that he will then speak

will be good or bad, exactly according to the education and the social culture of the people with whom he consorts, and the kind of authors whose books he is in the habit of reading. But even if he should accomplish what I have suggested to him, he could hardly, I venture to say, write German with precision and clearness unless he should study the grammar of the language. From my very moderate acquaintance with its structure, I should say that of all the languages that are learned for business or literary purposes — English, German, French, Italian, and Spanish — German is the one in which an acquaintance with the rules of its grammar is most necessary to a writer of it, even when it is his mother tongue. It is indeed a most discouraging language to a foreigner; and its grammar is only less complex than the Greek. About as well might a man undertake to learn Greek as German without learning its rules. True, it may be, and it is, picked up by valets-de-place in a valet-de-place way. Then there is the Ollendorf method. But I frankly confess that I have not much respect for that. It seems to me but a poor substitute for the being born over again in the right place. The effect of this regeneration is not accomplished by asking in a foreign tongue, "Have you seen the green goggles of my uncle?" "Have you worn the petticoat of my aunt?" and replying, "I have seen the green goggles of your uncle;" "I have not worn the petticoat of your aunt." I know no way of learning a foreign language that has a real grammar, that is, the structure of whose sentences depends in a great measure upon the forms of words and the correlation of those forms, than by studying the laws of that grammar; and if this correspondent means to

learn German he must prepare himself for a long, tough wrestle.

It is asked in various quarters, and even by those who begin to see the real nature of the English language, if I would have no rules at all of English Grammar taught. I answer, None whatever to children under twelve years of age, or thereabout; none until the scholar has already learned good English by hearing it and by speaking it. In this I have the support of so eminent a philologist as Professor Whitney, who says that it is "constant use and practice, under never-failing watch and correction, that makes good writers and speakers;" and that good English is to be taught not through the study of grammar, but "the application of direct authority." The example by and the authority of parents, kinsfolk, friends, and teachers, who themselves speak correctly, will lead a child surely into a right use of his mother tongue. After he has thus learned that use, then let him enter upon the "reflective study" of its history and structure, if he has the time, the inclination, and the ability for such a mental exercise. This study, however, will not help him to speak correctly or to write well. It is merely a knowledge, simple of itself, barren of daily usefulness. In Professor Whitney's words, "No one ever changed from a bad speaker to a good one by applying the rules of grammar to what he said." It is true, as one critic puts the matter, as to grammar, that "without a knowledge of its laws, acquired either from actual tuition in it, or from constant intercourse with people who speak grammatically, or from the reading of good writers, no man can write correctly and eloquently." But the force of implication in these *ors* is tremendous. In my opinion the

intercourse and the reading are worth the tuition a thousand times over. And the peculiarity of the English language in this respect is that to obtain the most complete mastery of it only intercourse with good speakers and reading good books are necessary. Tuition may be wholly dispensed with.

CHAPTER XX.

TERVIEWING. — A PARENTHETICAL CHAPTER. — NOUNS USED AS "ACTIVE TRANSITIVE" VERBS.

I AM asked, called upon, entreated, exhorted, almost plored to denounce, proscribe, ban, and excommu- cate, with bell, book, and candle, the verb *to inter- ew*. With all my heart, I would do so if I could. If a stroke of my pen I could extinguish the verb, th its two participles *interviewing* and *interviewed*, d its noun *interviewer*, — nay, could I by a word t out of existence the interviewer himself, the ng as well as the name, — I know that manslaugh- as well as word slaughter would sit lightly on my d to-morrow. But with curses in my heart, I am nd, if not to bless this word, at least to refrain elf from evil speaking of it. The son of Beor not more sorely racked between his wishes and duty than I am between mine; and like him I st say to those who summon me to curse the com- n enemy that if they were to give me, what I need more than Balaam did, a house full of silver and l, I could not declare against the correctness, the ect regularity, and no less the clear expressive- s of this word detestable.

My tongue is tied and my hand is stayed not be- se I remember, or think I remember, having met h the word in a play by some one of the Eliza- han dramatists; for a bad, abnormally formed rd is not made a good one by any usage, however

eminent; while, on the other hand, it is not bad merely because it is a new word, a neologism, or a "neoterism," as a "neoterist" — shall I say? — has chosen to call such things. But I must withhold myself from expressing the feeling which the word excites, I believe, in the minds of all decent people, by pronouncing against it upon its own merits. For it is a perfectly proper word. If we have *view* as a verb, there is nothing to be said against *interview*. We might as well undertake to set aside *intermeddle* from *meddle* as *interview* from *view*. And on the other hand, we have long had *interview*, the noun; and having that, the use of it as a verb is a use of language than which there is nothing more truly English. This of course carries with it the participles in *ing* and in *ed*, and the name of the agent in *er*. It would seem, then, that there is nothing to be said against the perfect legitimacy of *to interview*, *interviewing*, *interviewed*, and *interviewer*.

But although I am thus constrained to admit the perfect propriety of this new name, I would, as poets invoke the Muses, call upon the Furies to aid me while I prophesy against this new thing. It is the most perfect contrivance yet devised to make journalism an offense, a thing of ill savor in all healthy nostrils. It elevates prying into an art, leaving it no longer a mystery, and makes boring a paid profession. It is a conspiracy against the privacy of the individual, which is more deserving of reprehension, because it is less open to remedy, than an attempt against the liberty of the citizen. To get gain by the gratification of a feeling, curiosity, so petty that its expression degrades even the noblest countenance, it attempts to dignify intrusion with the mantle of the teacher who

ministers to the noble desire of knowledge. It panders to the vanity of petty men who covet notoriety; it extorts a sacrifice of time and inclination from men who would avoid needless publicity, by making them shrink from seeming personal discourtesy to the interviewer; and it places the person who either consents or refuses to be interviewed at the mercy of his tormentor, who in either case can misrepresent him, and who often does so, to suit his own purposes, or those of his employers. It is in every respect a thoroughly contemptible business, which honorable journalists should shun as they would shun contamination.

My personal experience of interviewing is small; but it has not been such as to modify favorably my judgment of it in the abstract. I was ill, confined to my house, and seeking and needing the perfect mental quiet which was prescribed as one of the conditions of my recovery. A gentleman called, and was informed that I saw no one. He called twice again, and at his third call left word that he was from the ——, and that it was important that he should see me. Thinking that some person or some cause in which I was interested was in need of a service that I could render, at his next call I saw him On entering the room I told him that I was ill, but that I was ready to hear what he had to say; when to my surprise he began an inquiring conversation upon a subject which in my judgment was not worth five minutes of the time of any reasonable creature. I told him so. He was perfectly civil in manner, but equally pertinacious. He "supposed that I had read the article in the —— upon the subject." I told him that I had not. He asked if I had read another arti-

cle upon the same subject in another newspaper I told him that I had not; and although he contrived to continue the conversation for a little while, I managed to make the interview as short as I could make it without being rude to a man in my own house. For this is the means of extortion that pertains to interviewing. The victim must do some talking at the risk of seeming churlish and personally offensive. Now the man who talks with an interviewer is lost.

I thought that I had rid myself of the matter, and that I should hear no more of it. Vain delusion! What was my surprise to see published the very next morning a report of this interview, beginning with the assertion that I had entered with alacrity upon the discussion of the subject, and that I had said that I had read the two articles upon it that I had not read, my opinion as to its triviality and futility being, of course, entirely omitted, and the opinions which had dropped from me in the course of the brief replies that I could not help making being set forth in a style which represented them about as exactly as this article would represent my opinions upon the present subject if, after being put in type, some printer's boy should knock it into pi. And then the jeers for days from certain friends that a man of my experience with the press should allow himself to be entrapped into an interview! How, in the pride and insolence of their uninterviewed souls, they girded at me!

But this was not the end. Twenty-four hours had hardly passed when word was brought me, just as I had sat down to dinner, that a gentleman wished to see me upon business of importance, and would wait my leisure. To relieve him, I saw him immediately. He was of suave and gentle manners; and he blandly

proposed to me that, as he saw the report just mentioned could not have done me justice, I should write out an article expressing fully my opinions, which he would considerately publish in the form made and provided for such occasions. That interview proved to be a very short one indeed; and I returned to my dinner with a venomousness of appetite altogether unbestowable by the bitterest tonics of my physician. But somehow or other it must have got about that I was an interviewable man (*interviewable*, although never used before, I believe, is an excellent word, and *uninterviewable*, which is five seconds younger, much better, — indeed, quite admirable); for a few days afterward one of the fraternity, after calling twice in vain, sent in his card, "Mr. ——, of the ——," to me at dinner. He wished to see me upon another subject (having been sent, I grieve to relate, by a treacherous friend), and to know if I would not be seen then, when I could be seen. The answer was, Not at all. Whereupon, as my servant informed me, he demanded his card in a huff, and went off in high dudgeon.

I recount this experience, brief and mild although it must be in comparison with that which others have gone through, not for my own sake, but because I hope that it may be of some service to those who have undergone less discipline than mine. And yet I will say for myself that hereafter, if an interview with me is reported, it may be safely assumed, first, that I have not been interviewed at all; next and last, that the opinions, or at least the language, attributed to me are not mine; in which respect I shall only have suffered what others, as we know, have suffered before. What journalism now chiefly needs

to sweeten it and give it dignity is a decent respect for the personal privacy of all men.

The foregoing consideration of interviewing (both the word and the thing) was, on its first publication, made the subject of not a little remark, critical and jocose, in various quarters, more or less notable. That which was merely in the way of common grammar talk may be profitably passed by with little attention. It consisted chiefly of expressions of anguish that I could countenance the making "an active transitive verb of the noun *interview*." Now as to what is an active transitive verb I am not quite sure that I or any one else can clearly tell; but I do know that whether all the nouns in the language are made into articles of that kind I do not care a copulative conjunction. In one quarter, however, an intelligent critic went into particulars, and jocosely, but plainly with serious intent, cited a published account of a sleigh-ride of some gay young people, who, before returning home, visited the village restaurant, where they were, in the language of the reporter, "oystered" by Mr. Jones. The question was then asked, "Why is not the verb 'to oyster' as good as the verb 'to interview,' and as legitimate? And why are not 'oystering' and 'oystered' the equals in propriety with 'interviewing' and 'interviewed'? And why are not 'to suicide,' 'suiciding,' and 'suicided' — the latter word being frequently used by the Associated Press to save tolls — as legitimate as either of the others?"

There is no reason why they are not in form just as correct. The legitimacy of either cannot be disputed on any ground that I can now perceive. *Oyster*, to be sure, is a noun; but so are *butter*, *bread*, and

names of the usual accompaniments of oysters. Yet for generations we have known the man bread is *buttered* on both sides, we have eaten ed cutlets, we have dined men and *wined* them. In "Punch" we have one of Mr. Du Maurier's little damsels complaining that her brother has not only buttered his bread, but has lly been and *Liebig's-extract-of-beefed* it as We may have bowels of compassion for poor , who ate that half-stewed fleshly abomination; to the phraseology of his sister, although she make a rather startling compound verb, there no doubt, in my judgment, as to the correct- the use as a verb of the compound noun *Lie- xtract-of-beef*, which is perfectly analogous with rb use of *butter*. It is not the verb use of the that strikes us as strange and laughable, but ompound; the use of which as a verb it is that es upon us the fact that the four words really but one noun.

reover, there is the case of the Bowery boy, approaching with his sweetheart another in like r accompanied, in the lobby of the theatre, "I say, Bill, have yer salooned yer g'hal?" w," was the reply. "Then lend us two shil'n, 'll treat." Here grant the noun *saloon*, and the ve transitive" verb *to saloon* (the grammarians ell me if I am wrong) cannot be disputed. uestion as to its use is one of taste, not of una- l correctness. And just so it is with *oystered interviewed*. Those who like them may use without the slightest fear that they are vio- any rule or analogy of the English language. language has recently been enriched with the

verb *to finance*. I find in a late number of the London "Telegraph," "They have also largely *financed* the paper of projected or unfinished railways;" and if *negotiate* will not do, *finance* may be used with equal correctness. As to *financiered*, for some possibly discoverable reason, it seems to be falling into disgrace.

To *suicide* as a verb, the objection is of altogether another sort. Its inadmissibility depends not upon its noun form, but upon its meaning. *Suicide* is merely an English form of two compounded Latin words meaning self-murder. To say that a man suicided himself is therefore to commit the absurd pleonasm of saying that he self-murdered himself; and to say simply that he suicided is to say that he self-murdered, which is as thoroughly and absurdly un-English as to say of a man that he self-loved, or self-praised, or self-washed, instead of that he loved himself, praised himself, washed himself. The same objection, and no greater, would apply to *homicided*, *fratricided*, *parricided*. In all the nouns on which these supposed verbs are based, the object of the action and the action itself are both expressed; and it is not English, never has been, and we may, perhaps, safely say never will be English, to use an "active transitive" verb without an object of its action. On the other hand, there is no more thoroughly English use of Language, according to its best usage since it was first spoken, than the making a noun do duty as a verb; always provided that its meaning admits of such conversion. As to whether we shall say that we oystered our friends, or liquored them, or that we salooned our g'hals, that is purely a matter of personal taste; in regard to which too great fastidiousness might perhaps savor of bloated aristocracy.

CHAPTER XXI.

VOICE, TENSE, CASE, GENDER, ETC.

ABOUT the passive voice and auxiliary verbs, so called, enough would seem to have been said in "Words and their Uses;" but in reply to suggestions and queries upon the subject it may be well to say a little more, although at the risk of some repetition.

It is not strange that those who have been brought up to think that "I am loved" is the passive voice of "I love," and who have been misled by the phrase "auxiliary verbs," should shy away from the blunt assertion that English has no passive voice, and that the verbs so called are not properly auxiliary; that is, that they have their own proper meaning and force whenever or wherever they are used, and are not mere aids in the formation of a real tense. According to all English grammarians, the auxiliary verbs, so called, are *have*, *is*, *shall*, and *will*; but it seems to me that *may* and *can* are equally so, and by some grammarians they are so regarded. If "I shall go" is a tense, in which *shall* is auxiliary, it should seem that "I may go" is equally a tense, in which *may* is merely auxiliary. As to meaning, if in "I have apples", *have* means possess, how is *have* voided of that meaning in "I have lived"?

The opposite and generally received theory has been ably and ingeniously defended by Professor Whitney, who says that "where there is even no object for *have* to govern, where condition and not

action is expressed, and 'you are been,' 'he is
'they are gone,' would be theoretically more
(as they are alone proper in German), then w
converted *have* from an independent part of
into a fairly formative element." This is que
Dr. Morris in his "Historical Outline of Engli
cidence" as an explanation of the formation of
by composition. It is with unaffected diffiden
I express a doubt as to the soundness of a
which has the support of two such eminent
ogists as Dr. Morris and Professor Whitney
shall venture to examine this one.

First, as to the proviso, "where condition
action is expressed." Does *have* ever expre
thing but condition, the state of possessing? D
ever express anything but the condition of exi
Is either of these verbs expressive of action? A
to "he is come" and "they are gone," whic
fessor Whitney cites as theoretically more corre
other forms of expression which he implies ar
practically correct according to English usage,
to understand that he and Dr. Morris deny t
though "he *has* come" and "they *have* gon
often heard, "he *is* come" and "they *are* gon
the better and indeed the correct forms, and ha
support of higher and longer usage? This
hardly believe. As to the theory that *have* lo
meaning of possession and becomes a "formati
ment" of tense-by-composition, it is to be rem
that the idea of possession is not always or nece
that of gross physical possession. When we s
have a hope," we do not mean that we have
in our hands, or in our pockets, or in a basket,
were an apple; we mean that we possess it

hearts, or we mean, as we often say, that our hearts *are possessed by it;* we are in a hopeful condition. The notion of possession is more subtle, more intellectual, than it is when we say, "I have an apple;" but still there remains the notion of possession. So, when we say, "I have to go," we express obligation by declaring that we possess, or are possessed by, the idea of going. The notion of possession is here even yet more subtle, more intellectual, than in the phrase, "I have a hope;" it becomes even moral; but it is still the notion of possession.

Nor does there seem to me in this even any theoretical difficulty; for *to go* is a noun, a verbal noun, and any noun may be the object of the verb *have*. The French made, ages ago, their future tense by the union of this idea of possession with a verbal noun. *J'aimerai*, I shall love, is simply *je ai aimer*, I have to love; the idea of possession, alien to that of obligation, implying the certainty of future action. So we say in English, "I shall love." *Shall* expresses obligation, and obligation implies future action. This no English scholar questions; and any one will easily perceive the obligatory meaning of *shall* in the phrase, You shall do so and so. The French by uniting *ai* (have) to *aimer* (to love) as a suffix have made a real tense. This is what is called a synthetic form of language; and the Frenchman uses *aimerai* without any thought that he expresses his future by saying, "I have to love." In English, however, we preserve the analytic form, and keep the words *and the thoughts* separate; the idea of possession, although subtle, intellectual, and moral, not being lost, but being as positively and absolutely present as they usually are in our use of phrases which have become so common

that we do not think of analyzing them in thought speech.

Let us now consider tense and passive voice called, together. According to the English gr marians, "We have been pleased" is the first pe plural of the perfect tense of the passive voice of verb *please*; and according to Professor Whitney I apprehend him rightly) *have* has here lost its m ing of possession, and is become a mere "for tive element." But we say, "We have been m pleased," thrusting an adjective, *much*, between elements, formative and other, of the so-called ten Now it is the function of an adjective to modify the part of a tense, but a noun or its equivale which in this case is the participial adjective *pleas* To test this so-called tense formation further in same way, let us consider the effect upon it of following modifications: —

We have been pleased.
We have been much pleased.
We have all been pleased.
We have all been much pleased.
We all have been much pleased.
We have been all much pleased.
We all much pleased have been.
All we much pleased have been.
Much pleased we all have been.
Much have we all been pleased.

It seems to me that here the tense and v

[1] Those who choose, with the grammarians, to call *much* in one p to adjective, and in another an adverb, although it really expresses same thought, may call it here an adverb. But when we say, "He was a man of much wisdom, much the wisest man of modern t mes," though *much* modifies first a noun, and then an adjective, it would be sult to show why it should be called one thing in one place and an thing in another place.

"have been pleased" is very much shaken to pieces. These forms of the same expression are all English. Every one of them has the support of the best usage, and most of them have the support of common usage as well as that of the best. But the so-called auxiliary verbs, including the "formative element," are separated at our pleasure, and scattered about without the slightest regard to any other consideration than the use of the words to express our thought in just such a form as suits us. And we may not only put an adjective between our auxiliary verb and our "formative element," but we may do the same with nouns and adverbs, and say, for example, "We Americans have all certainly been very much more than pleased at the honors done to General Grant in Europe." Will any one dispute that the first clause of this compound sentence, ending at "pleased," is in itself a perfect sentence? It would be interesting, certainly, and perhaps instructive, if any one who does not dispute it would explain why it is any more a sentence than "We have been pleased," — the so-called first person plural of the perfect tense of the passive voice of the verb *please*. Is there really any reasonable doubt that tenses that may be broken up and scattered through a sentence as this so-called tense is in the last sentence given above are mere grammatical shams? What is the use of teaching a child or a man that such successions of words, each of which has its own meaning, and any two of which may be separated at pleasure by the introduction of other words, each of which has also, no more nor less, its own meaning, are moods and voices and tenses?

Other languages have voices; English has not. The phraseology, or the terminology, of the gram-

mars of other languages has been pedantically applied to English, to which it has no real relation. "Love" is an active verb, — when it is not a noun or an adjective, — but it is not properly called an active voice, because that expression distinguishes it from a passive voice; and where is the passive voice? "I shall have been loved" expresses futurity, completion as to time, and passivity; but it is not a perfect tense of a passive voice. If we had twisted it round and worked it together into *lovdshalhaben*, and then into *lovshalaben*, as the French did their *aimer* into *aimerai*, so that we should say, *I lovshalaben, you lovshalaben*, and so forth, without thinking of the meaning of the formative elements, or of the elements at all, but merely regarding it as a simple word with a simple meaning, we then should have had a future perfect tense of a passive voice. But we preserve the analytic form, and, I think, with the form preserve the proper meaning of each word in our little sentence.

The analytical and logical character of English is almost its distinctive trait among languages. Other modern languages are analytical and logical to a certain degree, but very much less so than English is. To speak and to write good English it is necessary only to choose proper words, and place them in such an order, in such a relative position to each other, that they will set forth our thoughts logically. The choice of words is a matter of preference, of taste, so long as we use them in their proper or their recognized senses. In all languages the speaker or the writer who chooses the best words for his thoughts will produce the most pleasing and the most forcible impression. And so, indeed, the order of words is in

all languages to a certain degree a matter of importance; but it is far more so in analytical than in synthetical languages (Latin and Greek, for example), and most of all in English. Moreover, in English the position of words has something more than the importance which relates to pleasing effect and to impressiveness. It touches the question of one sense or another; of sense and of nonsense. We have seen that it is the mere position of a noun in regard to a verb which decides whether it expresses a subject acting or an object of action: *e. g.*, "Men love women; women love men." This is and must needs be the case in languages which have no objective or accusative form of the noun to distinguish it when it has an objective sense. If we were to write, "Men women love," it would not be certain whether men or women were the object of love, although it would probably be women; but in speech it would be decided by inflection of voice and emphasis. The importance of the position of words increases just in proportion to the analytical character of a language.

This matter of position is not only a fact as to the construction of English, but a tendency. It is an element of what is loosely called the genius of the language. This may be exemplified by a change which has taken place somewhat recently in the use, as to position, of the word *only*. In the "Rape of Lucrece," Lucrece says to Tarquin, —

"This deed will make thee only loved for fear."

But she did not mean that Tarquin would be "only loved" because of fear; but that he would be loved only for fear. So Collatinus says of his dead wife, —

"Let no mourner say,
He weeps for her; for she was only mine,"

meaning, She was mine only. And in that beautiful sonnet (Shakespeare's fifty-fourth) beginning—

"O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!"

the poet says of wild roses, which have no perfume,

"But for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwoo'd and unrespected die,"

meaning, not that the show or appearance of wild roses is virtue only, but that their only virtue is their show. A truer perception of the significance of logical relation, as indicated by position, has changed the usage in regard to *only* since Shakespeare's time. For example, "for only she was mine" means that the speaker possessed only the she referred to, "for she was mine only" means that he, and he only, possessed her; "for she was only mine," although it is susceptible of the second construction, means a general acceptance she was nothing else but mine. This illustration of the effect of position might be carried on without end; and it would be extended had I needful room. Word position in the English sentence is determined by and defines the logical relation of thought.

It is objected, on the part of the grammarians, to the theory that English is grammarless because it lacks voice, cases, gender, etc., that gender, case, voice, mood, and tense have nothing to do with the forms of words, but are "*attributes* given to nouns and verbs, which sometimes have means of showing those attributes, and more frequently have not." This is specious, and to those whose minds have been perverted by the study of English grammar may seem plausible, and even more than plausible. But first it is a very vague view, or a very vague statement of

a view. What kind of attributes can be given to words? A man may have attributes, or any subject may have attributes, which may not be shown; but how can a word, which is a mere sound or sign of a sound, have an attribute which does not appear?

Passing by this general argument, I come to the particular plea that "a verb which denotes or expresses passivity is in the passive voice, whether that voice is shown by a termination or by an auxiliary verb." This argument has an inherent incongruity which destroys it. Like Gonzalo's commonwealth, its latter end forgets its beginning. It is quite true that a verb which expresses passivity is in the passive voice. I have not written anything to the contrary. If any one will find me such a verb in the English language, I will agree that, if not in the passive voice, it at least is a passive verb.[1] But the argument closes by assuming that the passivity is expressed by an auxiliary verb. In other words, passivity is expressed not by the verb in question, but by another verb. An astonishing argument this to prove that a verb may express passivity, — to show that it cannot do so except by means of another verb.

A brief illustration will make this clear. *Love* is a verb; and it is an active verb, because the word *love* expresses an action. Now, what is the verb, the word, which expresses the reception, or the undergoing, of that action? There is none. Passivity in regard to love is expressed by "I am loved." Now,

[1] English has one passive verb, the only one known to me, which is now rarely used, *hight*. This verb needs no "auxiliary" and no participle; it means "is called." Shakespeare uses it several times "This child of fancy that Armado hight;" "As I remember, hight Costard;" "This grisly beast which lion hight by name." It is not uncommon in more modern poetry. It is a real passive verb.

in this phrase there is no word, verb or other, that expresses passivity. *Am* is the only real verb, and that expresses only present existence. *Loved* is not a verb, but a participle; and even as a participle it does not express passivity, but only perfected action. In "I shall have been loved" there are three verbs, *shall*, *have*, and *been*, not one of which expresses passivity, and a participle, *loved*, which also has no such expression. But the sentence or phrase as a whole does express passivity, perfected and future. It seems plain, then, that there is in English no passive voice of any verb.

As to case, it is urged that "a noun used as the subject of an independent sentence has the nominative case, whether that case is shown by its position or by a termination." This argument seems to be brought forward in ignorance of the meaning of the word *case*. In English and in some other languages subjectivity or objectivity may be given to a word by position, but case cannot. For *case* — from *cadere*, a fall — means metaphorically something that has fallen, and in the cases of nouns the word is supposed to have fallen away from the normal upright standard or stem form of the word. Therefore it is that nouns are "declined," that is, passed through their declination, or stages of falling, to wit, their cases. Case without special form is impossible; it is a contradiction in terms. And therefore there is really no nominative case, not only in English, but in any language. For the nominative is the normal form from which there must be declination (*casus*) before there can be case. The nominative is called a case only for the convenience of grammatical study.

Moreover, if the relation expressed by a noun pe

by position or otherwise, in a case, then we have only a nominative case and an objective, but a ive case, which has been remarked upon previ- y, on page 286. For example, when a lady says er friend or her groom, "Put me on my horse" d she might much better say *upon* my horse), she s to herself as the object of an action, and the lish grammarians say that *me* is in the objective But when she says to her maid, "Put me on t-iron," she does not mean that she wishes to be on, or upon, the flat-iron; she means, Put *for* on a flat-iron. She uses *me* not in an objective e, but a dative. So when a boy says, "Show a picture," he means, Show *to* me a picture, show icture *to* me; *me* is not used objectively, but ively, and "picture" is the object of the verb ow."[1]

is needless to carry this illustration further. is there, because of this dative sense, a dative case English? If aye, then there is also a vocative, n we call, "Tom! Tom!" But we all know there is neither a dative nor a vocative case; and we shall all see that there is neither an object- nor a nominative case. We merely express the ective, the dative, and the vocative idea; but we t by the same case (so to speak); that is, by no at all, except in pronouns, and even in those the ve case has disappeared. For the possessive we a real case. Mere dictionary definition decides

[1] I remember a school-fellow's going to our master — an egregious marian — and asking him how to parse "Give me a book" (or some sentence). Pedagogus replied, 'In those cases you have to parse *me* objective case governed by *to* understood.' (See Squeers, in the first ter of this division.) And I remember laughing in my boyish sleeve e notion that the sentence must be parsed, and at the fetch by which hat had to be accomplished.

this question so far as definition can do so. As I write I turn to Stormonth's Dictionary, — small, but the best I know of the English language, — and that defines "case" as "that which falls, comes, or happens. . . . . The *inflection* of nouns." This argument for case is futile, because, if it prove anything, it proves that which all the world knows to be untrue.

As to gender, the position is taken that this grammatical distinction should not be held to depend on inflection, if we express the same ideas which are expressed in other languages (Latin, for example), by words that have gender; and this view is particularly urged in regard to adjectives. Let us see: *bonus liber*, a good book; *bona domus*, a good house; *bonum aratrum*, a good plow. Now, do the words *bon-us*, *bon-a*, and *bon-um* here express anything more or other than is expressed by the word "good"? Nothing. There is no question about the matter. But *bonus*, *bona*, *bonum*, are respectively masculine, feminine, and neuter; and therefore, according to this argument, "good" must be masculine in the first example, feminine in the second, and neuter in the third. This leads the grammarian into a dreadful predicament; for in "a good book," "a good house," and "a good plow," the adjective is, in all the examples, of the neuter gender, that is, of no gender at all, because the nouns "book," "house," and "plow" are neuter. Now, there was nothing male in a book, or female in a house, or any more reason why a plow should not be regarded as either male or female, in the times of the ancient Romans than there is now. Thus this matter of gender is purely grammatical, and pertains to words only, not to things or even to

thoughts, and has nothing to do with sex. It is the *words* for book and house and plow which in Latin have gender; the things were as sexless two thousand years ago as they are now. And this word-gender has nothing to do with form. *Pennæ* and *pennarum* are feminine equally with *penna*. Nor has it even anything to do with termination. *Penna*, ending in *a*, is feminine, but *domus*, ending in *us*, is also feminine. Yet *dominus*, with the same termination, is masculine; and *liber*, with still another termination, is also masculine. But we may dismiss all this. We have no more anything to do with gender. We simply do not call a woman a man, or a cow a bull.

CHAPTER XXII.

PRONOUNS.

I MUST say something briefly about the wor
the grammarians call pronouns. They have h
name ever since the first existing systematic t
on grammar was written by Dionysius, sur
Thrax (that is, the Thracian), which is more t
teen hundred years ago. This name, pronoun
ing "for a noun," would seem to justify the def
given by Lindley Murray, and by most other
marians. "A pronoun is a word used inste
noun, to avoid a too frequent repetition of th
word." The examples usually given, which
this sort, "John is a good boy; he learns his
do, indeed, support the definition. For in suc
the word *his* is used instead of the word *John*
it does enable us to avoid a monotonous it
But this definition takes the most narrow and
view possible of the subject. It is most rem
for what it omits.

We get a glimpse at what it does omit
Lindley Murray. At the foot of the page, i
small type, is a note setting forth that a pr
"may also represent an adjective, or a sentenc
part of a sentence, or sometimes even a se
propositions." The following examples are
"They supposed him to be innocent, *which* h
tainly was." "His friend bore the abuse ve
ciently, *which* served to increase his rudeness;

duced at length contempt and anger." In the first of these examples, the pronoun is used instead of the adjective "innocent." In the second example, the first pronoun, "which," does not refer even to a foregoing sentence or phrase, but to a supposed phrase, that is, "his bearing the abuse patiently;" and the second, "it," represents the supposed phrase, "the increase in his rudeness." Here we have at once an astonishing enlargement of the definition that a pronoun is a word used instead of a noun, to avoid too frequent repetition; and when it is considered that this last use of pronouns is one of the most common, we begin to see that these so-called make-shifts, or representatives of nouns, are something else than we have been taught that they are.

It having been objected to my citation of Lindley Murray and Goold Brown as representative English grammarians that those writers are somewhat old-fashioned, and that we have now grammars both more compact and more rational than theirs, I quote from "The Elements of the English Language," by Dr. Adams, of University College, London, fifteenth edition, 1877 (first edition, 1862): "Pronouns are short words used to represent nouns without naming them. They thus avoid a repetition that would always be tedious and often obscure." Also from Professor Whitney's "Essentials of English Grammar," the last and best book on its subject: "A pronoun is a word standing for a noun or ordinary name, and may, like a noun, be used as subject of a sentence." Again, in the same book we find, "A pronoun does not precisely name anything, but it points to or points out some person or thing that has been named before, or that is shown by a gesture, or is defined by its rela-

tion to something else that is named." We thus see that the grammarian notion of a pronoun has not changed much, even in the mind of so able a reformer of English grammar as Professor Whitney.

Now, that a pronoun may, like a noun, be used as the subject of a sentence is clear enough; but that it is sufficiently defined as a word that stands for a noun or ordinary name, or as one that points out some person or thing that has been named before, seems to me a false notion, — a notion which has its origin in the name pronoun, and which has been handed down, and accepted almost without question, from grammarian to grammarian for centuries. True, Buttman does say that "pronouns cannot be so precisely defined as not to admit many words which may also be regarded as adjectives." But this is only a part of the confusion which reigns in grammar. For the very grammarians cannot agree among themselves as to the limits between nouns and adjectives, so that some of them compromise the matter by making two classes, nouns substantive and nouns adjective. And there is a like dispute as to whether some words are conjunctions or prepositions, and a decision that they are both. And much good such disputes and such compromises and decisions are to people of common-sense, who can read with understanding and delight, and write clearly what they have to say, without knowing a noun substantive from a noun adjective, or a conjunction from a prepoeition! As to pronouns, Lindley Murray says they are of three kinds, — personal, relative, and adjective; but in Professor Adams's accidence (cited above) they develop into "personal, demonstrative, relative, interrogative, possessive, reflective, reciprocal, indefi

ve, and distributive pronouns." Here, as Mrs. alaprop says, is "a nice derangement of epitaphs." could be shown that there are not these nine divis- ns among pronouns, but that the uses of the same rds run into and lap over each other; but even if were not so, to what use this mere naming of ver- l tools? It helps no one to understand, to think, speak, or to write.

The notion hitherto received, and without question, believe, that a pronoun is used instead of a noun, that it points to, or points out, some person or ing that has been named before, seems to me alto- ther wrong, — so wrong that I wonder that any n of intelligence who has examined the subject and ought upon it at all could take such a view of it on econd thinking. Let us see. In the sentence,

"For he who fights and runs away
May live to fight another day,"

hat noun is "he" used instead of? What person or ing named before does it point out? In the well- own utterance of one of the saddest of those truths at seem eternal, "To him that hath shall be given, d from him that hath not shall be taken away that hich he hath," what noun does "him" stand for? hat person or thing named before or after does ther "him" point out? It does, by the aid of an- her pronoun and of a verb, "that hath," point out me person, or rather a class of persons; and in like anner we know that the last "him" refers to a rson or class other than that referred to by the st; but neither of these persons or classes has been ntioned or in any way indicated before. "Him" re means merely the man, or those men. It does t "stand for" those words any more than many

another word stands for what it means; and
tainly does not point out any person who h
named before (for none has been named),
is to be named afterward, for none is nam
is not a *pro*-noun. So in "Who steals m
steals trash," the so-called relative pronoun
means any man that; but it is not used ins
any noun; nor does it refer to any person me
before. The relative has no relation; it does
late. If I were to go on with this illustra
could be much varied and yet more exten
bring up these few examples merely to dir
reader's attention to the fact, of which he m
many examples in his every-day reading, tha
noun, even a personal or a relative pronoun, se
is not necessarily used instead of another n
prevent repetition, and that it does not nec
point out or refer to some person or thing
named before or even after.

The truth upon this subject is that the s
pronoun, instead of being a make-shift, a conv
to prevent confusion and monotony, a sort of
dix and auxiliary to an already developed voca
is the noun of nouns, the word of words, th
important, the most radical, and the most inera
element of language. It represents the begin
thought; its evolution is the first sign of hum
sciousness, — we may almost say of animal co
ness.

When the infant first knows by touch tha
is another thing in the world but itself, the ide
resented by *I* and *it* are at once evolved. Th
feels touch is "me;" this that touches is "no
Here is the first dawn of consciousness, if not t

ray of intelligence. "Me" and "not me;" in this twin-born thought comes the knowledge of self-existence and of existence outside of self, which is the beginning of all knowledge, the starting-point of all thought; and in "me" and "not me" are involved the germs of all the so-called pronouns. "Not me" is "it;" and "he" and "she" are (mentally, not etymologically) mere modifications and divisions of "it," consequent upon after-experience and reflection. So also is "you" a mere modification of the idea "not me" expressed by "it." "We" is an expansion of "I;" "they" an expansion of "it." There are really but two persons, the first and the second, representing the "me" and the "not me," but the second has been divided, and a third made by the introduction of the modified form of the "not me" before mentioned.

From these considerations it seems clear that the pronoun expresses the first, the most important, and the most inexpugnable idea that finds utterance in language. For it will be found that *who*, *what*, *this*, *that*, and the rest have the same relations, or a modification of the same relations, to the expression of the first act of consciousness and cogitation that *I*, *you*, and *it* have; in fact, that the former words express ideas which are directly related to and involved in the latter.

The word called pronoun, then, so far from being a mere convenient substitute for something more important, — a *remplaçant*, to use an operatic phrase, — is the word which expresses the first distinction made by the human intellect; it is the word of substantive distinction, by which persons and things are, first, separated from the *ego*, the "me," and, next, from each other; a distinction which precedes all other

distinguishing, as, for example, that into livi
not living, not to say into classes of animals a
viduals. The pronoun is the first existing sub
noun.

It may be owing, but I am not now prep
say that it is owing, to this primordial qu
pronouns that in all languages they are the m
cient and immovable parts of speech, that th
to have a peculiar origin and development, a
in all the Indo-European tongues the princi
nouns are to all intents and purposes the sam
number of people of all climes and tongues
me has the same signification (with modifica
pronunciation too slight for consideration)
counted only by hundreds of millions, and th
tity of the expression of self as distinguished
self stretches back into the remotest ages.
nouns, although they are slightly modified i
are not added to or lessened in number. T
number has disappeared and with it the d
noun; but except this change, the ranks of
nouns in the Indo-European tongues stand
they did at the dawn of the historic period.
dropped nouns and verbs by the hundred;
taken new ones in their places; but the p
stand. There is no such thing as a new pro
even a modern pronoun; and to make and in
a new pronoun, as, for example, an impers
in English for the expression of relative di
without sex, would be a task of such difficu
it might be set down as impossible. This
meagre and sketchy presentation of a view o
called pronoun which I venture to think is w
consideration by those who think at all ab
guage.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SHALL AND WILL.

At the request of many readers, I shall say something more than I have already said (in "Words and their Uses") on the words at the head of this chapter.

The mistakes made in the use of *shall* and *will*, and *should* and *would*, by persons who are not unlettered, and who are wont to hear English well spoken, must come, it should seem, either from sheer carelessness or inapprehensiveness, or from the opposite tendency to a fussy taking of thought about propriety and grammar in speech, instead of talking right on as words as they come by habit, and caring only to utter a thought or to tell a story. And the latter is rather more apt to cause confusion and entanglement than the former. Most true is this about such alternative words as *shall* and *will*, *should* and *would*, any attempt to use which with a conscious conformity to the rules of "good grammar" will, in most cases, quite surely — to speak elegantly — eventuate in calamity. The best way is to give yourself no trouble at all about your grammar. Read the best authors, converse with the best speakers, and know what you mean to say, and you will speak and write good English, and may let grammar go to its own place.

In recommending the reading of the best authors for this purpose, if for no other (and this is the least important for which they should be read), I do not

mean that you should look to them as "auth
and use no word or form of speech for whic
not find the warrant of example in their
That would be almost as bad as a solicitud
"speaking good grammar." There was never
absurd resolution than that of Fox, to admit
into his history (never finished) for which he
the authority of Dryden. The effect upon
of the reading of the best authors is like th
sociation with the best bred people upon
which, as far even as external politeness goes,
better than a pocket copy of my Lord Ches
letters. Genuine politeness comes only by a
inward grace and outward culture; and so a
tery of language is in a great measure a bi
like beauty, or strength, or stature.

As to *shall* and *will*, something may doub
done by study, and by taking thought to ch
habits and correct the result of unfortunate
tions. The mistake most commonly made in
of these words, and the one, therefore, most
to be avoided, is the use of *will* for *shall*, and
corresponding *would* for *should*. *Shall* is m
often used for *will*. And yet in the word
shally, which is upon everybody's lips, is petri
rule and the example in regard to *shall* and
Shilly-shally is merely a colloquial corrup
"Shall I? Shall I?" and thus expresses th
tion of a man who is vacillating between two
of conduct. It has been made into a particip
haps even into a verb. A man who "stands
shallying about a woman," as the ladies say, i
who, as they also sometimes say, does n't kn
own mind about her, — a mental condition fo

the sex has no very great liking. Now no one would say that a man stood asking himself, "Will I? Will I?" and yet such is essentially the mistake most frequently made in regard to the use of these words in conversation. We hear some people say, "What *will* I do?" and even, "*Will* I do" thus or so? — the offenders in these cases being generally of what some people humorously call the Hibernian persuasion, — an expression, by the way, for which there is "authority" of very respectable standing and antiquity. Among people of Anglo-Saxon race and of average education the mistake, when made, most commonly takes the indicative form, thus: "I *will* go to bed [elegantly, retire] at ten o'clock to-night," or "We *will* breakfast at eight to-morrow," instead of, "I *shall* go to bed," etc., "We *shall* breakfast," etc. Not quite so often we hear, "I *would* be glad to go," "We *would* be happy to see you," instead of, "I *should* be glad," "We *should* be happy," etc.

As striking examples of the misuse of *will* and *would* (which, as I have said, is the most common form of this speech-illness), I give the following extracts from a newspaper of the highest class, and one of the most carefully edited in the country. If the editor saw them, they must have set his teeth on edge: —

"An order was made that supplemental mails to all European steamers *will* [*shall*] be dispatched to the steamer from the main office after the close of the regular mail."

"M. Soutzo, who killed Prince Ghika in the recent duel near Paris, has written an impudent letter from Luxembourg to the Procureur of the French republic, saying that after the duel he left Paris, lest his arrest *would* [*should*] cause his mother serious emotion."

In common conversation and in ordinary writing these forms of the shall-and-will idiom are those in

most frequent use, and therefore those most frequently misused. There are other confusions; but they pertain to subtler forms of thought. A speaker once well grounded in *I shall, I should, we shall, we should, you will, you would*, as mere declarations of future action, and *I will, I would, we will, we would*, as expressions of present will or determination as to future action, and *you shall, you should*, as expressions of obligation or necessity in future action, will rarely go astray upon other points, if he has any familiarity with the writings of good authors.

The rule and the reason of this idiom will be found set forth with sufficient clearness in almost all good grammars, — they have at least that value.[1] But upon solicitation, they are set forth briefly here in a form somewhat differing from any one in which I have ever seen them; they are as follows: —

Will in the first person expresses a wish and an intention, or a promise; as, "I will go," that is, I mean to go, or I promise to go. *Will* is never to be used as a question with the first person; as, "Will I go?" A man cannot ask if he wills to do anything. That he must know, and only he knows.

Will in the second person declares or foretells; as, "You will go with him." Hence it is used with courteous authority as a command, because it foretells something that must happen. A superior officer says to a subordinate, "You will report yourself," etc. As a question, *will* in the second person asks the intention of the person addressed; as, "Will you go to-morrow?" that is, Do you mean to go to-morrow?

Will in the third person also declares or foretells

[1] Almost all grammars in common use have, however, the fault of giving "I shall or will" for the future tense, as if either form were to be used indiscriminately.

as, "He will come," that is, He is coming, and may be looked for. As a question, *will* in the third person asks what is to be the future action of the person spoken of, with a necessary reference to intention; as, "Will he go?" that is, Is he going? Does he mean to go, and is his going sure? In the third person, *will* has of course no mandatory force.

Shall in the first person simply declares or foretells, without any reference to wish; but when it announces personal action, it of course may accompany intention; as, "I shall go," that is, I am going, I am to depart hence. Used as a question in the first person, it is a simple inquiry as to the future; as, "Shall I find him?" that is, May I expect to find him? or it asks direction; as, "Shall I go?" that is, Decide for me as to my going.

Shall in the second person and in the third declares authoritatively, and therefore promises, commands, or threatens; as, "You shall be paid," "Thou shalt not steal," "They shall suffer," — which need no paraphrase.

Would and *should* conform to the usage of *will* and *shall*; *would* referring to an exercise of will, and *should* implying contingent, dependent action, or obligation.

As the uncertainty felt by some as to the use of *shall* and *will* is in regard to the persons to which they are to be severally applied, they, with *would* and *should*, are arranged below under the headings of the three persons, in conformity to the rules given above: —

FIRST PERSON.

Simple Future	I *shall* go.	We *shall* go
Contingent or Obligatory	I *should* go.	We *should* go
Interrogative Simple	*Shall* I go?	*Shall* we go?
Interrogative Contingent, or Obligatory .	*Should* I go?	*Should* we go?

SECOND PERSON.

Simple Future	You *will* go.
Contingent or Obligatory	You *would* go.
Interrogative Simple	*Shall* you go?
Interrogative Contingent, or Obligatory	*Should* you go?

THIRD PERSON.

Simple Future	He *will* go.	They *will* go.
Contingent or Obligatory	He *should* go.	They *should* go.
Interrogative Simple	*Will* he go?	*Will* they go?
Interrogative Contingent, or Obligatory	*Should* he go?	*Should* they go?

These forms imply no exercise of the will on the part of the person who speaks, or in regard to the person spoken to or spoken of. "I shall go" means merely (as we have seen before), I am going; "You will go," you are going; "He will go," he is going. "I should go" means, I ought to go, or, I would go if there were reason; and in "You should go" and "He or they should go" *should* has the same limitation of meaning. When will is exercised or implied, the future action may be called determining, and is expressed as follows: —

FIRST PERSON.

Determining Future	I *will* go.	We *will* go.
Contingent Determining	I *would* go.	We *would* go.
Interrogative Obligatory Determining	*Should* I go?	*Should* we go?
Interrogative Contingent [rare]	*Would* I go?	*Would* we go?

SECOND PERSON.

Determining Future	You *shall* go.
Contingent Determining	You *would* go.
Interrogative Determining	*Will* you go?
Interrogative Contingent Determining	*Would* you go?

THIRD PERSON.

Determining Future	He *shall* go.	They *shall* go.
Contingent Determining	He *would* go	They *would* go.
Interrogative Determining	*Shall* he go?	*Shall* they go?
Interrogative Contingent Determining	*Would* he go?	*Would* they go?

The rules above given, and the classification by persons which follows them, cover all the uses of *shall* and *will*, *should* and *would*, with perhaps one excep-

tion, and may, I believe, be relied upon by those who seek a guide in this matter. It seems to me, however, that rules and classification of such subjects are, for practical purposes, of little value, or rather of none; sometimes of less than none. They who need them cannot apprehend them and apply them; they who can master them are they who have no need of them. But still, "Would you go?" *is* an interrogative contingent determining future form; and it may be of use to some persons to be told that it is so.

As to *would* and *should*, it will be found that, with one exception, to be remarked upon hereafter, whatever the connection in which they appear, they are used, the former with some implication of will, the latter with some implication of obligation. For example, *would*, when it expresses a habit or a custom, as, "She would weep all day," "He would bluster like Herod," implies a habitual exercise of will. In such phrases as, "I would have you take this to heart," the expression of will is very plain; and in such as, "Would that it were night! Would that it were morning!" mere will or strong wish is expressed, and *would* can hardly be called an "auxiliary" by any grammarian. Consequently, when will or wish is expressed by any other part of a phrase, *would* becomes superfluous and out of place. Expressing willingness, we say, "I would grant your request;" but if we introduce *willingly* or *with pleasure*, we use *should*, and say, "I should willingly, or with pleasure, grant your request," not, "I *would* willingly," etc. In like manner we say, "I will see you to-morrow;" but if we add an expression of pleasure, "I shall be glad, or happy, to see you to-morrow," not, "I *will* be glad," etc. For example: —

"Lord Strathmore gives me commission to say, he *shall* be extremely glad to see you at Glames." (Gray, Letters, iv. 67.)

"The editor cannot conclude without adding that he *shall* be happy to receive hints and materials for the improvement and better elucidation of the Spectator and Guardian," etc. (John Nichols, Advertisement to the Tatler, ed. 1786.)

Both these examples are formally incorrect; for in both the third person is used, and that requires *will*, — "He *will* be happy," etc. But they are the more impressive because they show the influence of the expression of preference. Lord Strathmore said to Gray, "I *shall* be extremely glad," etc., and Gray repeated what his lordship had said. Nichols, writing in the third person, but thinking in the first, says of himself, "He shall be happy to receive hints;" as speaking he would have said, "I shall be happy," etc.

In the phrases, "You *should* do this" and "He *should* not do that," the expression of obligation, duty, debt, is very plain; and even when *should* is used to express design or plan, as "Under the circumstances I *should* do thus, or so," there is an expression of obligation, of something owed to the circumstances.

Briefly, *will* and *would* refer directly or indirectly to the exercise of will; *shall* and *should* imply debt, owing, obligation.

Example in regard to language is much more valuable than precept; and particularly is it so in regard to the subject under discussion. I therefore give here a few passages in which the correct distinction in the use of these words is very clearly and sharply drawn. They are from the works of authors of reputation, who

are too modern to have any odor of antiquity about them, and who, with one exception, are noted for the care and precision of their writing; and yet that one excepted author, the first one cited, furnishes the best example. I do not know in English literature another passage in which the distinction between *shall* and *will* and *would* and *should* is at once so elegantly, so variously, so precisely, and so compactly illustrated as in the following lines from a song in Sir George Etherege's "She Would if She Could:" —

"How long I *shall* love him I can no more tell,
Than, had I a fever, when I *shou'd* be well.
My passion *shall* kill me before I *will* show it,
And yet I *wou'd* give all the world he did know it;
But oh how I sigh, when I think, *shou'd* he woo me,
I cannot refuse what I know *wou'd* undo me."[1]

(Act V., Scene 1, ed. 1704.)

This and the following passages, from the same author and from others, may well be read with reference to the rules and classification given above: —

Gat. Letters! Bless me, what *will* this come to?

Court. To that none of us *shall* have cause to repent, I hope, madam.

(The same, iv. 2.)

Med. Where *shall* we dine to-day?

Dor. Where you *will.*

(Etherege, Sir Fopling Flutter, i. 1.)

"I must give notice to my correspondents for the future, who *shall* apply to me on this occasion, that as I *shall* decide nothing unadvisedly, etc. . . . . However, for the future I

[1] Observe the lightness, freedom, and idiomatic ease of this cleverly constructed and almost colloquial song, — none the less admirable in these respects because of its freedom in another sense. It is written throughout in the best English that is spoken, — that of a well-bred, but not necessarily much educated, and decidedly un-literary woman, who has acquired her mother tongue unconsciously by intercourse, all her life, with well-bred people.

shall have an eye to the diet of this great city, and *will* recommend the best and most wholesome food, etc." (Addison, Tatler, No. 147.)

". . . . in short, a thousand matters that you *shall* not know till you give me," etc. (Gray, Letters, ii. 6.)

"If wishes could turn to realities, I *would* fling down my law books," etc. (The same, ii. 7.)

". . . . and I never desire to part with the remembrance of that loss, nor *would* wish you *should*." (The same, iv 28.)

"If he does, I *will* send him (in a packet to you) the same things I *shall* send to Dodsley." (The same, iv. 76.)

"I believe soon I *shall* bear to see nobody. I *do* hate all hereabouts already, except one or two. I *will* have my dinner brought upon my table in my absence, and the plates fetched away in my absence, and nobody *shall* see me." (Shenstone, Letters, No. 16.)

"I have an old aunt that visits me sometimes, whose conversation is the perfect counterpart of them. She *shall* fetch a long-winded sigh, with Dr. Young, for a wager." (The same, No. 36.)

"The minister who *should* propose it *would* be liable to be told," etc. (Helps, Friends in Council, ii. 5.)

". . . . and therefore it was not to be presumed that they *would* do anything wrong." (The same, Slavery, ii.)

"It was one of the deep superstitions of Realmah that if he *would* succeed no form of life *should* be hostile to him." (The same, Realmah, chap. xvi.)

In the second passage from Shenstone, "She shall fetch a long-winded sigh," *shall* has a certain binding, obligatory force, as if he had said, "I promise you, I undertake, that she shall," etc. It indicates the state of mind which leads to a bet. The third passage from Helps illustrates not only the distinctive meanings of *would* and *should*, but the peculiar change in the meaning of a sentence which follows a

change of their places, and putting one in the stead of the other. "If he *would* succeed, no form of life *should* be hostile," means, If he wished to succeed, no form of life ought to be hostile, etc.; but "If he *should* succeed, no form of life *would* be hostile," means, In case of his success, he would find no form of life hostile, etc.

There is a use of *should* which can hardly be determined by the rules, or disposed under any one of the heads above given. It generally appears in an impersonal construction; as, "It *should* seem thus," "*Should* it prove so." As *would* conforms to *will* and as we have 'He (or it) *will* seem," we should expect, "He *would* seem," and so, "It *would* seem." But the best usage for centuries has been, "It *should* seem," "One *should* think," etc. Here are a few examples, beginning with the Elizabethan period, before which, according to my present memory of my reading, the impersonal use of *should* is not common: —

"It *should* seem by the lawes of Lycurgus . . . . that the Grecians," etc. (Lloyd's Conference of Divers Lawes, 1602, page 74.)

"Nevertheless, it *should* seem that the Doctrine of Abubeyner hath not lost all force; for the Examples are many in all Saracens Lands." (Sir Walter Raleigh, Three Discourses, ed. 1702, Ecclesiastical Power.)

"He is no suitor, then? So it *should* seem." (Jonson, Magnetic Lady, i. 1.)

"It *should* seem so certainly; for her breath is yet inflamed." (Beaumont and Fletcher, Knight of the Burning Pestle, v. 2.)

> *Phil.* I suspect this shrewdly!
> Is it his daughter that the people call
> The miller's fair maid?
> 2 *Lord.* It *should* seem so, sir
> (Fletcher, The Maid in the Mill, iii. 2.)

"But finding him, as it *should* seem, by nature little studious." (Reliquiæ Wottonianæ, page 76, ed. 1652.)

"But it *should* seem the very horror of the fact had stupefied all curiosity." (The same, page 117.)

"An island in the air inhabited by men, who were able (as it *should* seem) to raise or sink it as they pleased." (Swift, Gulliver's Voyage to Laputa, chap. i.)

"The royal power, it *should* seem, might be intrusted in their hands." (Hume, History of England, vol. iii., p. 383.)

"In judging only from the nature of things, and without the surer aid of the Divine Revelation, one *should* be apt to embrace the opinion of Diodorus Siculus." (Warburton, Divine Legation, vol. ii., p. 81.)

". . . . considering which, one *should* imagine it ought to be larger than one finds it." (Gray, Letters, Sec. 2, Let. v.)

"It *should* seem the many lies discernible in books of travel may be owing to," etc. (Shenstone, Works, 1764, vol. ii., p. 192.)

"Richard Greenham . . . . became minister of Dry Drayton, three miles distant, where it *should* seem from a rhyming proverb," etc. (Gilchrist's Note to Bishop Corbet's Distracted Puritane, page 246.)

". . . . and one *should* suppose that a body which died of such a distemper must contain in a high degree," etc. (Wraxall's Tour, 1775, page 403.)

"One *should* have imagined that echoes, if not entertaining, must at least have been harmless." (White's Natural History of Selborne, Letter 80, February 12, 1778.)

"As one *should* suppose, from the burning atmosphere which they inhabit, they are a thirsty race," etc. (The same, Letter 89.)

"You are not exactly the person from whom one *should* expect fables." (Helps, Friends in Council, chap. vi.)

Examples of this kind might, of course, be given without number, and so easily that to those who have

considered this subject these may seem superfluous, except for the sequel. I add instances of a like use of *should*, not impersonal: —

". . . . here a shepherd's boy piping as though he *should* never be old." (Sidney, Arcadia.)

". . . . if hee had traced the nature of the soule from its first principles, hee could not have suspected it *should* sleepe in the grave," etc. (Sir Kenelm Digby, On Religio Medici, 1643, page 12.)

"One might imagine that the latter, indebted, etc. . . . . *should* have readily repaid this poetical obligation." (Shenstone, Works, 1764, vol. ii., p. 177.)

". . . . and one *would* imagine if that argument concerning the distance of the rhymes in [Lycidas] were pressed home in a public essay, it *should* be sufficient to extirpate that kind of verse forever." (Shenstone, Letters, No. 62.)

"It will be seen that, although the letter *p should* seem to have been fully recognized," etc. (Prompt. Parv., preface, xlix.)

The impersonal use of *should* where, according to analogy, we should look for *would* I shall not undertake to explain; for showing what it is and what it is like can hardly be called explanation. It will be seen that in all these examples, instead of *should*, we might use in some cases *ought*, in others *might*, although we should in either case not express fully and exactly the sense of the original phrase, in which *should* conveys something of the sense of each of those words. This use of *should*, and more rarely of *shall*, corresponds to that of the German *soll*, which is used to convey a doubtful or questionable assertion, one for which the speaker does not answer; as, for example, *Sie sollen es gethan haben*, which, although *sollen* = shall, means, It is said that he has done it,

He may have done it. (And yet in a mandatory sense we have *Er soll gleich gehen* = He shall go instantly.)

This, the subtlest form of this idiom, appears with its most delicate signification in the phrase, now rarely heard or seen, "as who should say." For example: —

"As who *should* say, God hath given you ceremonies, but ye know not the use of them." (Tyndale, Prologue to the Five Books of Moses, 1530, vol. ii., ed. 1828, p. 22.)

"As who *should* say, Lo! thus my strength is tried." (Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis, l. 280.)

". . . . as who *should* say, He would rather they would turn from their wickedness and folly." (Burthogge, Causa Dei, 1675, page 150.)

This idiom, however, seems not to have been always well apprehended, and *would* has been used by good writers instead of *should*. Even Burthogge, quoted above, a learned writer of excellent English, elsewhere in the same work furnishes the following examples: —

". . . . that there is a Blessed Begotten God, as who *would* say, the Son." (Causa Dei, page 257.)

"As who *would* say, that there is God, the Son," etc. (The same, page 259.)

So writers of repute give support to the use of "it *would* seem" and "one *would*," etc., of which Shenstone furnished an example above, and here are others: —

"For though one *would* suppose that if it be once sincere, had a true original, and was wisely contracted, it should," etc. (Palmer, Moral Essays, etc., page 169.)

"And that, so far from withdrawing into warmer climates,

it *would* appear that they never depart," etc. (White's Natural History of Selborne, Letter 90, October 10, 1781.)

"I will only add on this point that it *would* appear from the constant allusions in our old ballads," etc. (Warter, The Seaboard and the Down, vol. i., p. 115.)

There seems to be no doubt, however, that in this idiom *should* — as, "it should seem," "one should suppose," "as who should say" — has a preponderance of usage on its side, and that such instances as those given above may be regarded as examples of a deviation from that idiom.

There is another discrimination between *would* and *should* which is worthy of attention, particularly as it has been pronounced upon by a recent critic with what may appear to have been too little knowledge and too much pretension. The usage referred to is where the verb expressing future action follows and depends upon the expression of a wish or a command; as, "I request that you will go to your own home," or as in the following sentence from Swift's "Voyage to Lilliput:" —

"He desired I *would* stand like a Colossus, with my legs as far asunder as I conveniently could." (Chap. iii.)

In cases like those above, in which the assertion is direct and personal, the general usage of the best writers is that of *will* and *would*.[1] But it is by no

[1] The writer referred to above having brought forward a single instance of this usage, I add a gleaning from my memorandums, confining myself as before to writers of repute: —

"To this Ulysses answered and said:
'T was not her fault we came not both together;
She bade me I *would* not; but," etc
(Hobbes, Odyssey, Book VII., l. 281.)

"And I made bold to desire my conductor that he *would* be pleased to explain." (Swift, Gulliver, Laputa, chap. i.)

means universal, even among such writers, and when the construction is impersonal *should* is used, as "It was desired that we *should* come." A sentence remarked upon in "Words and their Uses" (page 269) —

". . . . and *it was requested* that no persons *would* leave their seats during dinner" —

is directly at variance with the best English usage, as was therein pointed out. Writing hastily, however, and with too little care, I said that "*we request* that people *shall* do thus and so," when the question before me, and which I had in mind, was as to what should follow the impersonal phrase, "*it was* requested," or as to a somewhat similar construction. Whereupon the world was informed that the phrase which I condemned is "perfectly idiomatic;" that my comment is "absurd," except according to "the English of Edinburgh, Dublin, and New York:" and, moreover, that "neither in Old England nor in New is there a plowboy of ten years old" who could not here set me right. It is comforting to see

"Therefore I hope the reader will forgive me that I desire he *would* go to the play called the 'Stratagem' this evening." (Steele, Tatler, No. 3.)

"I shall begin with a very earnest and serious exhortation to all my well-disposed readers that they *would* return to the food of their forefathers" (Addison, Tatler, No. 148.)

"Sir Robert has written to Mr. Walpole to desire he *would* go to Italy." (Gray, Letters, Let. ix.)

"I desire you *would* believe that I absolutely assent to your critique." (Shenstone, Letters, No. 3.)

"Meanwhile it is our wish that our country *would* adopt the healthful, pious, and economical practice of what Sir Thomas Browne calls 'the fiery solution'" (St. John, Anatomy of Society, i. 243.)

"He wishes — but he is very ill, so ill he cannot rise from his bed — that I *would* go and visit him" (Landor, Pericles and Aspasia, ed. 1843, vol. i., p. 48.)

". . . at the end of which he prayed the prince that he *would* intercede in his favor with the king." (Helps, Friends in Council, Slavery, i.

Giant Despair stumble headlong when he pursues the victims whose bones he means to break and to pick. This writer, with all his paraded reading, was plainly ignorant of the usage of which here are a few examples: —

"We *desired* it *should* be opened." (Swift, Voyage to Lilliput, chap. ii.)

"And the Gray made me signs [that is, *desired*] that I *should* walk before him." (Swift, Houyhnhnms, chap. i.)

"I *expect* you *should* send me a congratulatory letter, or, if you please, an epithalamium." (Addison, Spectator, No. 89.)

> "Led in his hand the pimp had brought me
> Three bouncing wenches, and *besought* me
> I *should* decide the strife, and stop all
> Their mouths that watered for an apple."
> (Ratcliffe, Wits Paraphrased, ed. 1680, p. 69.)

"Mr. Mauleverer, who has studied astronomy very carefully, expressed a *wish* that in the evening we *should* come out upon the lake," etc. (Helps, Realmah, chap. viii.)

"We *wish* that our good host and hostess *should* take a little conjugal walk, arm in arm." (The same, chap. —.)

"They burst in upon the banquet with loud *demands* that Otho *should* show himself." (History of Tacitus, translated by A. J. Church, of Oxford, and W. J. Brodribb, of Cambridge.)

"Receiving a reply in the negative, she *desired* that she *should* be sent to her as soon as she came in." (Mrs. Alexander, The Wooing O't, chap. xxxiii.)

With this introduction to a few "English plowboys of ten years old," I bid my giant farewell. To my readers I shall venture to say that if they express hoping and wishing and the like with *will* and *would*, and command, demand, and mandatory desire with *shall* and *should*, — for example, "I hope that Mrs. Unwin *will* invite them to tea," and "I *wish* that

Mrs. Unwin *would* invite them to tea;" but, "He *commands* that Mrs. Unwin *shall* invite them to tea," and "He *desired* that Mrs. Unwin *should* invite them to tea;" and impersonally, "It is wished that no person *shall* leave his seat," and "It was requested that no persons *should* leave their seats,"— they will not be far from right.

It has been strongly insisted upon, by men whose learning and ability command the most respectful consideration of their opinions, that the established usage as to *shall* and *will* (if indeed it may be regarded as established) did not prevail until after the Elizabethan period; and the plays of Shakespeare and of contemporary playwrights, and even the authorized translation of the Bible, are appealed to in support of this opinion. Lowth, in his grammar (1763), was, I believe, the first to set forth this opinion, which has been since accepted and repeated, particularly by the editors of Shakespeare, to account for the irregularities in this respect which appear in the text of his plays.

In a deference to such judgments too unquestioning, but perhaps becoming, I adopted in my edition of Shakespeare's works the common opinion on this point, — an opinion which subsequent examination of the subject has led me to believe is entirely erroneous. It seems to me clear now that the shall-and-will idiom was well rooted many generations before Shakespeare wrote, and that he himself fully recognized it. In not a few passages in his plays, as in those of his contemporaries, it is violated; but this is entirely owing to the heedlessness as to "grammar," and even as to correctness of style, with which those plays were written, and the carelessness with

ich they were printed, — a double cause of con-
on of all kinds as to their language, which, the
er I consider it, the more does it seem to me im-
ible to be overrated.

his position with regard to Shakespeare may fort-
ely be proved to reasonable certainty. For in
poems, which he wrote with care and had printed
care, resting upon them alone his literary repu-
n, but which, had they not been buoyed up by his
ly written and utterly neglected plays, produced
mere journey-work for daily bread, would have
into the oblivion of bibliomaniacal collections,
those poems and in the sonnets, which he also
e as literature and circulated among his private
ds, there is not a single violation of the estab-
d usage as to this idiom; not one; although the
words occur in those writings at least four hun-
and seventy times.[1] It seems to me that this
as to the poems which Shakespeare wrote with
is decisive as far as he is concerned. But we
not left to such inference. Two younger con-
poraries of Shakespeare, both famous men, have
droll but unmistakable evidence upon this point.
rge Wither closes his spirited lyric poem, begin-
—

> "*Shall* I, wasting in despair,
> Die because a woman 's fair?"

a stanza in which is the following couplet: —

> "If she love me, then believe
> I *will* die ere she *shall* grieve," —

couplet much in favor with all women. Now Ben

[1] To this conclusion my own examination of the poems and sonnets brought me some years ago; and I am now strengthened and built up by the publication of Mrs. Horace Howard Furness's *Concordance Shakespeare's Poems*. Mrs. Furness gives every word in the poems.

Jonson wrote a burlesque parody of this poem; and the couplet corresponding to the one above is this:—

"If she *hate* me, then believe
She *shall* die ere I *will* grieve."

The distinction between *shall* and *will* could not have a more marked recognition. And beginning with the two other more celebrated dramatists of the Elizabethan era, Beaumont and Fletcher, and going backward, I shall quote a series of passages, each characteristic of its author's use of this idiom, which will, I think, make it clear that *shall* and *will* came into the language, distinguished from each other, at the earliest period of which we have any record, and that they have been used for centuries with nearly, if not exactly, the same force in combination with other verbs which they now have, although they had also, when not so combined, their primitive meaning.[1]

Cit. Come, Nell, *shall* we go? the play's done.

Wife. Nay, by my faith, George, I have more manners than so; *I'll* speak to these gentlemen first. I thank you all, gentlemen, for your patience and countenance to Ralph, a poor fatherless child! and if I might see you at my house it *should* go hard but I *would* have a pottle of wine and a pipe of tobacco for you; for truly I hope you do like the youth; but I *would* be glad to know the truth: I refer it to your own discretions, whether you *will* applaud him or no; for I *will* wink, and, whilst, you *shall* do what you *will*. — I thank you with all my heart. God give you good night! — Come, George. (Beaumont and Fletcher, Epilogue to Knight of Burning Pestle.)

Do you think we *shall* do well?
Hon. Why, what *should* ail us?
(Fletcher, The Loyal Subject, Act III., Scene 5.)

[1] I will add that a careful examination of all the numerous letters by various writers in the *Memoirs of Sir Christopher Hatton*, Queen Elizabeth's dancing Lord Chancellor, has put me in possession of a mass of evidence which confirms this conclusion.

here I *would* say, I *will* punish thee, that all the *shall* take an example of thee, there the Jew *would* *will* circumcise thee," etc. (Tyndale, Prologues, etc., ed. 1828, p. 40.)

r hee assureth you that all *shall* be well. I assure nod the Archebishoppe, be it as well as it *will*, it *will* be so well as we have seene it." (Sir Thomas More, d III., ed Singer, p. 29.)

ten *shall* we by myne advice and the kynges author- fche hym out of the prisone." (The same, page 38.)

.. so farre out of ioynt that it *shold* never be brought te agayne. Whiche stryfe if it *shoulde* happe as it were e to come to a fielde . . . . yet *shoulde* the authoritie that side," etc. (The same, page 33.)

e thouz men *schulden* be iugis, zit so must thei be bi the said resoun and doom of resoun and if this be who *schulde* thanne better, or so weel, use, demene ecute this resoun and the said doom, as *schulde* tho hich han spende so miche labour," etc. (Pecock, ror, A. D. 1450, vol. i., p. 86, *apud* Olyphant.)

"Now *wolde* som men wayten, as I gesse,
That I *schulde* tellen al the purveyance."
(Chaucer, Man of Lawes Tale, l. 148.)

"And torne I *wol* ayein to my matiere."
(The same, l. 224.)

"The lyf *schulde* rather out of my body sterte
Or Makametes law go out of myn herte
What *schal* us tyden of this newe lawe
But thraldom?" etc
(The same, l. 237.)

"But lordes, *wol* ye maken assurannce
As I *schal* seyn, assenting to my lore
And I *schal* make us sauf for evermore?"
(The same, l. 243.)

"Or that the wild wawe *wo* hir dryve
Unto the place ther as sche *schal* arryve."
(The same, l. 370.)

"But what sche was, sche *wolde* no man seye
For foul ne fair, though that she *scholde* deye."
(The same, l. 427.)

Between Chaucer and Mandeville the Wyckliffite translation of the Bible is in place; but I omit the passages I had marked for quotation, because in no respect does the authoritative, declarative, and prophetic character of the sacred writings more affect language than in regard to the verbs expressive of future time. Hence *will* and *would* are of comparatively rare occurrence, even in our "authorized" translation. Tyndale, to whom we owe most of the *shalls* in that version, used *will* and *would* freely in his own miscellaneous writings. To go on backward with examples:—

"But zif it lyke zou I *schalle* shewe how zee *schulle* knowe and preve, to the ende that zee *schulle* not ben disceyved. First ze *schulle* wel knowe that the naturelle bawme is fulle cleer. . . . . And undrestondethe, that zif ye *wil* putte a litylle bawme in the pawme of zoure hond, etc. . . . . and zif it be naturelle bawme, anon it *wole* take and beclippe the mylk." (Sir John Mandeville, A. D. 1356.)

"Forth, drede delitable drynke, and thow *shalt* do bettere."
"That is the wrecched worlde, *wold* the bitraye."
"And for thou *sholdest* ben ywar, I wisse the the beste."
"The clerkes that kenneth this, *shulde* kenne it about."
"Kynges & knigtes *shulde* kepe it bi resoun."
"But holden with him & with hir that *wolden* al trewthe."
"And alle that worche with wronge, wenden hij *shulle*
After her deth day, and dwelle with that shrewe.
Ac tho that worche wel, ...
. . . . *shal* wend to heuene."
"No dedly synne to do dey thog thow *sholdest*."
"For the same mesures that ge mete amys other elles
Ge *shullen* ben weyen ther-with, whan ye wende hennes."
(Piers the Plowman, A. D. 1362, passus ii., *passim*.)

'Knelynge, conscience to the kynge louted,
To wite what his wille were, and what he do *shulde*.
'*Woltow* wedde this woman,' quod the kynge; 'gif I *wil* assente'?"
(The same, passus iv., l. 115.)

"He *sal* be king of kinges alle
To hend and fete we *sal* him falle
. . . . . .

Gais, he said, and spire well gern
And quen ye funden haf the barn
Cums agen and tels me
For wat warschip I *wil* him se."
(Cursor Mundi, A. D. 1320, *apud* Morris, page 72.)

"Y *shal* the shewe a pryuyté
A thyng that thou *shalt* do to me;
Y wyl that tho no man hyt telle;
. . . . . .
But thou do thus, y *wyl* be wroth,
And thou and thyne *shal* be me loth.
Zif thou do hyt y *shall* the zyue," etc.
(Robert of Brunne, A. D. 1303, Handlyng Synne, ll. 5750–5758.)

"Wonne hit and holdeth zut· *ichulle* telle in wuch manere.
. . . . . .
that he ne *wolde* abbe in al Engelond· an hurne to wite him inne.
. . . . . .
And zif thou me *wo't* seche in Engelond· ne be thou noxt so sturne
Siker thou be, tho ne *walt* me· finde in none hurne
Thou William hurde that he *wolde*· suateine is trecherie.
. . . . . .
William, and alle his
That into this bataile mid him *wolde* i wis."
(Robert of Gloucester, A. D. 1298, ed. Hearn, vii. 30, 31, 51.)

"Herknet to me gode men
Wiues, maydnes, and alle men
Of a tale that ich you *wile* telle
Wo so *wile* here, and therto dualle.
. . . . . .
Here y *schal* beginnen a rym
. . . . . .
Burwes, tunes, sibbe and fremde
That thider *sholden* comen swithe
Til him and heren tithandes blithe
That he hem alle *shulde* telle:
Of hem ne *wolde* neuere on dwelle."
(Havelok, about A. D. 1280, ed. Skeat, ll. 1–4, 21, 2277–2281.)

"Ich *chulle* vor the luve of the nimen this fiht upon me. . . . Ich wot thauh for sothe thet ich *schal* bitweonen ham ondervongen deathes wunde, and ich hit *wulle* heortelichte vorte ofgon thine heorte." (Ancren Riwle, A. D. 1220, ed. Cam. Soc., p. 388.)

"ich the telesn *wille* mine wille
. . . . . .
ich *wille* delen mine riche

and thou *schalt* worden wenchen
and wuman in wanside
for navere ich ne wende
that thu me *woldes* thus scanden
tharfore thu *scalt* beon dæd ic wene:
fliz out of mei eæh sene
thine sustren *sculen* habbere mi kinlour."
(Layamon's Brut, A. D. 1200-1210.[1])

"Forr thatt I *wollde* blitheliz
Thatt all Eonglisshe lede
Withth ære *shollde* lisstenn itt
Withth herrte *shollde* it trowenn,
. . . . . .
& ziff thezz *wilenn* herenn itt,
& follzhenn itt withth dede
Icc hafe hemm hollpenn unnderr Crist
To winnenn thezzre berrhless
& I *shall* hafenn forr min swinnc," etc.
(The Ormulum, A. D. 1200, ll. 131-143.)

"cwæth tht the hehsta
hatan *sceolde*
satan siththan."
(Cædmon, iv. 18.)

"nu *wille* ic eft tham lize near
Satan ic thær secan *wille*."
(The same, xiii. 35.)

"to hwon *sculon* wit weorthan nu."[2]
(The same, xiii. 38.)

"On geredæ hinæ
God almeyottig
tha he *walde*
on galgu gi stiga"[3]
(Stephens, Runic Monuments, i 405, Ruthwell Runes, about A. D. 680.)

[1] Layamon is filled full of illustrations of the shall-and-will idiom here is hardly a score of lines in which the distinction is not made.

[2] Saith that the highest
Be called should
Satan since then.
. . . . . .
Now will I again the flame near
Satan I there will seek.
. . . . . .
What shall now become of us?

[3] Engirded him
God Almighty
When he would
On gallows ascend.

This is but a small selection from the passages which I had chosen as examples. If they are characteristic, as I believe they are, it seems clear that the opinion that the shall-and-will idiom is of comparatively late establishment is not well founded, but that the usage dates from the very earliest period of the language; and that any deviations from it must be attributed to the carelessness or the ignorance of writers and scribes, and afterwards of printers. I have added the passages from Cædmon and the Ruthwell Runes because, although *shall* and *will*, particularly the latter, have doubtless in Anglo-Saxon less of the so-called "auxiliary" character than they have in modern English, I venture, although with some hesitation, to express the opinion that they have much more of it than seems to have been generally supposed.

As to the original meaning of these words, which is the germ of the idiom, that of *will* is plain enough to any reader. *Shall* (Anglo-Saxon, *sceal*) had its signification of "owe" — which it retained even later, I think, than the date of Chaucer's well-known 'I shal to God"[1] — in this way. It is the perfect tense of a Gothic verb *skulan*, to kill, and thus means originally, "I have killed," and therefore, according to the old Teutonic law, I *owe* the fine for having killed a man, the *wer-geld*; hence, I owe generally. This is Grimm's etymology, and the only one yet brought forward that seems to meet the case.

As to the misuse of this idiom, which some Englishmen are fond of setting up as a shibboleth against

[1] "Frende, as I am 'rewe knyght,
And by that feith I *shal* to God and yow,
I hadde it nevere halfe so hoote as now."
(Troylus and Cryseyde, Book III., stanza 229.)

Yankees as well as against Irishmen and Sco
and which some pedantic Yankees, more E
than the English themselves, find in its purity
mouths of babes and sucklings and among plo
I proposed to give in this chapter a long se
plain, unmistakable examples of its misuse by
lish writers of which I have memorandums sca
upon the fly-leaves of my books. But my re
am sure will be quite content that I should spa
labor, and give only the following, from C
Richard Burthogge, Samuel Shaw (the Puri
vine), Steele, Addison, Swift, Samuel Palmer,
stone, Burke, Landor, Robert Blakey, and S
Smith, — hardly either babes or plow-boys : —

"I met with several great persons, whom I like
well, but could not perceive that any part of thei
ness was to be liked or desired, no more than I
[should] be glad or content to be in a storm. . .
storm would not agree with my stomach." (Cow
says, ed. 1868, page 122.)

"Such a Protector we have had as we *would* [s
have been glad to have changed for an enemy."
same, page 136.)

". . . . as who should say, He would rather they
should, — in Absolution, Common Prayer Book, "
turn from their wickedness and folly and live."
thogge, Causa Dei, or Apology for God, 1675, page

"Oh, it is enough; we see that there are pleasant
in that land; we will [*shall*] never come at it." (S
Shaw, Voice of One Crying, etc., reprint, 1746, page

"After a short silence he told me he did not kno
I *would* [should] take what he was going to say." (
Houyhnhnms, chap. x.)

"Had it been otherwise you may be sure I *would* [s
not have pretended to have given for news," etc. (S
Tatler, No. 7.)

"But if we look into the English comedies above mentioned, we *would* [should] think they were formed upon quite a contrary maxim." (Addison, Spectator, 446.)

"The reasons for contentment are invincible unless we *will* [would] quarrel with the order of nature, which has determined that some shall be poor." (Palmer, Moral Essays, chap. cxxix.)

"I should be heartily glad if you would come and live with me for any space of time that you could find convenient. But I *will* [shall] depend on your coming over with Mr. Whistler in the spring." (Shenstone, Letters, No. [illegible], ed. 1769.)

"I *would* [should] be glad if Mr. —— were, upon your request, to give his opinion of particulars." (The same, No. 40.)

"If this passion was simply painful, we *would* [should] shun with the greatest care all persons and places that could excite such a passion." (Burke, Sublime and Beautiful, Part I., Section 14.)

"As an opiate or spirituous liquors *shall* [will] suspend the operations of grief, or fear, or anger, in spite of all our efforts," etc. (The same, iv. 4.)

"I *would* [should] wish to commence a new epoch in the composition of introductory chapters." (I says, says I, Lond. 1812, introd. chap.)

"He *promises* me it *will* [shall] soon be ready to sail," etc. (Landor, Pericles and Aspasia, page 251.)

". . . . how awfully *would* [should] I pause before I sent forth the flame and the sword," etc. (Sydney Smith, P. Plymly's Letters.)

"I proposed to Dr. Paley and our two Italian friends that we *would* [should] leave the Tweed." (Blakey, Old Faces in New Masks, page 311.)

Let us, then, should we make a slip, possess our souls in patience, and not bewail ourselves that we are utterly lost to English idiom. For he must be an

insufficiently informed critic of English literature who does not know that even the most thorough-bred English writers themselves have (as I have somewhat shown above) not always been able to use *shall* and *will*, and particularly *should* and *would*, without some shilly-shallying between them.

ORDS AND PHRASES.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"POPULAR PIE."

USED sometimes to go for oatmeal and milk to
of those unpretending eating-houses which are
led dairies, because at first their customers were
only on a diet of milk and of bread or porridge.
ey have not yet been dignified with the French
e *restaurant*, introduced by those who would
elegant, and who would avoid both the simple
ating-house" and the old-fashioned "ordinary,"
latter of which I remember having seen in my
hood, in New York, on the signs of the eating-
ses then in the wide part of Fulton Street which
tches between Water Street and the river.

As I was one day sitting in this dairy, ruminating
r my fodder, perhaps also in a Jacques mood,
hewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy,"[1] I
startled by hearing, in a sharp and rather nosey
ce, the assertion, in a discontented and positive
e, "I don't call this very pop'lar pie."

The extraordinary nature of this declaration roused
from my musing. It was addressed, as I found,
a pretty, fair-haired waitress by a lad, or, as he
ubtless regarded himself, young man, or, better,
ng gentleman. A glance at his face showed me

[1] I believe that Shakespeare wrote "chewing the *cud* of sweet and bit-
fancy," and that the presence of *food* in the old text is owing to the
nunciation of *u* as *oo*. (See *Memorandums of English Pronunciation
the Elizabethan Period*, vol. xii. of my edition of Shakespeare, 1868.)
change of the text is, however, hardly warranted.

that he was perfectly serious, and that he was quite unaware that what he had said was of any importance, except in so far as it expressed his opinion of the compound that lay before him, *rudis indigestaque moles*. I had expected to find the speaker something of a wag, and to see in a twitch of the eyelid, a slight twist of the mouth, or at least in a determinedly vacant and stolid look of the whole face, an indication of the consciousness of dry humor. I saw nothing of the kind. He was a chap some eighteen or twenty years old, who, in an inked and draggled linen coat, with his hat on the back of his head, a pen behind his ear, a long, heavenly blue satin neck-tie, and a large amethyst ring on the little finger of his right hand, had come in for his dinner of "roas beef lean an well done na cuppa coughy," to which he had added, by way of dessert or banquet, "up piece up eye." His declaration as to the segment of sodden dough and half-stewed "sass" with which he was about to afflict his bowels, that it was not popular, had no reference whatever to the favor with which it was regarded by the public at large, or even by that part of the public which frequented that particular eating-house. He meant merely that he found it not to his liking; that it was not good; and therefore he announced his inability to pronounce it popular.

It was the first time, I am willing to believe, that this word had ever been publicly used in that sense; and yet he was as unconscious that he had perpetrated a neologism as an honest German near by was that he had illustrated Grimm's law by calling for "bork und peans." To him *popular* meant good. From the very beginning of his knowledge of words he had heard and seen this word used in a way which

as he did not know its real meaning, led him to take it in the sense of excellent. A good thing was popular; a bad thing, unpopular. A popular measure, a popular man, a popular book, meant to him a good measure, a good man, a good book. Of the connection of *popular* and *popularity* with *populous* he was probably as thoughtless as he was ignorant of their connection with *populus*. His extraordinary perversion of the word was a striking illustration of the effect produced by the constant reference to the opinion of "the people" as a criterion of merit in all things, from pies to presidents.

This effect has come (for although the use of the word in his sense has, I believe, never been remarked, there are doubtless hundreds of thousands of persons to whom it has that meaning or nearly that) from an ignorance or a disregard of its essential meaning, and a fastening of the attention upon an idea altogether adventitious and incidental.[1] It is in this way that words are distorted from their true functions, and that language becomes so confused that people who have not the same intellectual training, and who do not breathe the same social atmosphere, rarely talk together without some misunderstanding, of more or less importance.

There are two words, for example, *gentleman* and *lady*, which in this country are, to all intents and purposes, without any generally accepted meaning. Among certain people they have one meaning, among certain other people quite another; and so divergent are these meanings that, unless you know the person

[1] Soon after the publication of this chapter in its original form, I received letters from two correspondents at the West, informing me that they had heard the word used by uneducated people there in the sense of good, excellent.

with whom you speak so well that you can put yourself in his place and assume his habits of thought, you cannot understand exactly what he means by the phrases a perfect gentleman and a perfect lady. The only meaning common to all who use them is their distinction of sex: they distinguish man from woman; two creatures that seem to have disappeared, almost, from the western world, except among people of the highest culture and simplest manners. Do we not see often the advertisement which announces that "a sales lady" offers her services to any one who may be in need of them? Does not the gentlemanly conductor ask us to move up in the bulging street-car, and "let in this lady," as Bridget McQuean, smelling slightly of pipe and poteen, struggles at the car door with her basket of clothes? Far be it from me to insinuate that Bridget is not a perfect lady; for I should thereby run the risk of having my head broken by Patrick, her husband, whom the conductor would also call a gentleman; chiefly, however, because it is not my business here to draw social distinctions, but only verbal ones. There are some people whose ideal of a perfect gentleman is a man who pays his bills without question the first time they are presented; tried by which test, I fear there are some of us who would fail sadly in the article of our gentry. A waiter's ideal of a perfect gentleman is a man who orders a good dinner, and, paying for it, gives him all the change under a dollar; and I know a woman of very excellent sense and breeding whose notion of a perfect gentleman is a man that never speaks to her in the street without taking his hat quite off, and does not sit in her presence until she does him the honor to request him to do so. Perhaps the waiter's criterion

is quite as reasonable as hers. Twenty years ago the South honestly believed that there were very few gentlemen in the North; and perhaps the most unexceptionable definition of a gentleman might then have been given, if the giver could have put his idea into words, by an old Southern negro house servant, who for all his life had served masters hardly better mannered than himself.

But it is not as to the meaning of such words and phrases only that there is confusion. The great difficulty in most discussions in general society is the misapprehension of terms. To various people the same words have different shades of meaning, and even meanings widely different. This is so much the case that intelligent and good-natured argument upon subjects of common interest is often found impossible. The disputants exasperate each other by what seem to them mutually to be willful perversions of language; the fact being merely that words really have to them different significations. The first step in all discussion should be the settlement of the exact meaning of terms in regard to the matter in dispute; and it will generally be found that this in itself involves no little discussion, and that the various apprehension of those terms makes rational and satisfactory discussion very difficult. The higher the culture of the disputants, the less of this difficulty will be found. Discussions among scholars and scientific men are comparatively easy and satisfactory, because they have a common and a clear idea of the meaning of the words they use. But yet there is good ground for Molière's satire when he makes Dr. Pancrace rave when Dr. Marphurius speaks to him of the form of a hat, when he should say the figure of

a hat.[1] The wide diffusion of a loose or mo
erate acquaintance with the terms of science,
losophy, and of criticism has increased this d
so much of late years that, as I have previous
tioned, some intelligent men, whose sensitive
shrink from wrangling, eschew social discu
together. Thus, the influence of this restr
added to many others which tend to that
tion of the higher style of conversation which
many years been among the negative force
deterioration of the pleasures of society.

It will be found that the words as to the
of which there is this divergent apprehen
mostly Latin words, more or less Englished
endings. Perhaps all words are subject in
gree to this misapprehension and perversion, b
of Romanic or Latin origin are more so th
English words, because of the imperfect an
speak, stranger-like apprehension of their
by the mass of the people.

1 *Sganarelle.* Et quoi encore ?

Pancrace. Un ignorant m'a voulu soutenir une proposition e
proposition épouvantable, effroyable, exécrable.

S. Puis-je demander ce que c'est ?

P. Ah! seigneur Sganarelle, tout est renversé aujourd'hui, et
est tombé dans une corruption générale : une licence épouvant
partout, et les magistrats qui sont établis pour maintenir l'ord
Etat devraient mourir de honte en souffrant un scandale aussi
que celui dont je veux parler.

S. Quoi donc ?

P. N'est ce pas une chose horrible, une chose qui crie vengea
que d'endurer qu'on dise publiquement la forme d'un chapeau ?

S. Comment ?

P. Je soutiens qu'il faut dire la figure d'un chapeau, et
forme d'autant qu'il y a cette différence entre la forme et la
la forme est la disposition extérieure des corps qui sont animés,
a disposition extérieure des corps qui sont inanimés, et puis
puis est un corps inanimé, il faut dire la figure d'un chapeau, et
forme.

(Le Mariage Forcé, S

Really to understand and rightly to use the whole vocabulary of what (apart from all technical words) has been called English for a very long time requires some knowledge of the Latin language. Evidence of this condition of things comes out very plainly when persons whose education has not included some study of that language, or constant intercourse with highly cultivated people (no small or inferior part of education), undertake to use the Latin part of our modern so-called English language. If they can do so without striking blunders, they very rarely escape without showing a misapprehension of the true, that is the radical, meaning of some one or more of the Romanic words they use. They stumble into some sort of "popular pie," and very often into something much worse. Wits and humorists have felt this, although they may not have had a clear apprehension of its cause. The blunders of the Mrs. Quicklys, the Mrs. Malaprops, the Mrs. Partingtons, and their kind will be found to be almost wholly in the Latin part of the language. In long English words their brains or tongues are not entangled; but a two-syllable word of Latin origin trips them headlong.

A somewhat close observation has given me reason to believe that many intelligent people, not in the humbler conditions of life, consciously fail to understand, or unsuspectingly misunderstand, not a little in the sermons and the speeches which they hear, and in the leading articles which they read. They say nothing about the matter, and they listen and read on, until by and by they get *some* notion of the meanings of the words which are at first mere sounds to them; but it is generally a vague and often a mistaken

reason. Like supposing *popular* to mean good, because goodness is a commonly assumed element in popularity. I have no doubt that could we think the thoughts of a very large proportion of the general public — those who have received only a common-school education, their schooling having ended at the twelfth or fourteenth year — we should find that in their reading and hearing they more or less mistake at least one in ten of the Romanic words used by a writer or a speaker. I am sure that such persons might listen for an hour to the talk of those of higher education, when the topics led away from the word-paths of simple English, and not really understand what they said, much better than if they spoke French or Latin, although the speakers themselves would not be at all conscious of anything outlandish or even unusual in their speech.

Quite another matter is that failure both of apprehension and of comprehension which is a consequence of the remoteness of a subject from the mind of the hearer or the reader; in which case it is the thoughts and the relations of the thoughts that are strange and out of reach. This, by the bye, has one remarkable result. I have read repeatedly, and to various persons, whose intelligence and information were much above the common, passages from the works of writers on moral philosophy and mental physiology, which contained no unusual words, and every word of which, as used ordinarily, my hearers clearly understood, and have been frankly told that they could not understand the passages at all; that the words, although they had a familiar sound, conveyed no meaning whatever to them; and that I might as well have read to them in a foreign language.

This phenomenon has relations with a fact which has not been remarked upon, to my knowledge, but which is worthy of observation: that not a little of our readiness at understanding what we hear depends upon its being in some degree what we expect to hear. When an answer to a question is entirely from the purpose, we often actually fail in understanding the words addressed to us, or, as we may think, in hearing them.

It is not, however, to that failure to understand which is the consequence of strangeness in the subject written or spoken of, that I have referred, but to that which is the consequence of the mere use of words foreign to the hearer. For example, I know that the servants that wait on us at table often understand almost as little of what we say in our talk over even the most common topics of the day as if we were speaking in a foreign language. I say that I know this because I have made experiments which enable me to know it. And I have had, in an official position, occasion to remark, in intelligent and capable marine officers and persons engaged in mechanical pursuits, as great an inability to apprehend the meaning of words and phrases which are of common occurrence in literature and in the every-day speech of educated people as there is among people in general to understand the technical phrases of seamanship or mechanics. And the words thus misapprehended, if not quite misunderstood, are almost always words of Latin origin; which shows, as I have said, that for the clear apprehension and understanding of the English language as it is now spoken and written, some acquaintance with the Latin language is necessary.

This, I am informed, is not the case in Germany. Highly educated Germans, it need hardly be said, use a vocabulary much more copious and varied than that used by those of their countrymen who are not so educated, — an unavoidable consequence of the wider range and subtler character of their thought. But owing to the fact that this vocabulary is mostly formed by combinations of German words, and not by importations from the Latin and Greek, the German of humbler grade, if he apprehends the meaning of what he hears or reads at all, apprehends it correctly. His mind strikes at once at the radical, central, vital meaning of the word that he hears: he does not fumble with some much deflected or merely adventitious or allusive signification. And thus there is in the German of every-day life much less of that double character which is so striking a trait of the English language. There is not in the former that divergence between the speech of the cultivated and the uncultivated which there is in the latter, even in these days of what is called popular education. The same is also measurably true of the Romanic languages, the French, Spanish, and Italian, which are to a great degree homogeneous. And here it may be remarked that much of what seems to us inflated in the daily speech of the Latin peoples is not rightly subject to that reproach. Our homely every-day speech is English, or "Anglo-Saxon," so called; and to speak in a general way, we reserve our words of Romanic origin for great subjects and great occasions. But with the Latin peoples the correspondent Romanic words form in a great measure their homely every-day speech.

To return to our "popular pie." How great is

the apparent change in the meaning of *popular* from the time when there was no incongruity in the question which Shakespeare puts into Pistol's mouth, "Art thou base, common, and popular?"[1] to the present, when it is used by some persons to express the most desired condition or quality in a man or a thing! And yet there has been really no change whatever in the meaning of the word, rightly used. It is the thing which the word means that has

[1] Pistol, it is true, is a fantastic speaker, and asks the grade or rank of the person whom he addresses; but there are instances enough of the use of *popular* in a derogatory sense. So late as 1631 Shirley wrote, in the Prologue to *Love in a Maze*, —

"That Muse whose song within another sphere
Hath pleased some, and of the best, whose ear
Is able to distinguish strains that are
Clear and Phœbean, from the popular
And sinful dregs of the adulterate brain," etc.

Popularity expressed at first the disposition of the person to whom it was applied, rather than the disposition of the people toward him: —

"We observe him,
His popularity: how affable
He 's to the people; his hospitality
Which adds unto his love"

(Thomas Heywood, The Royal King, 1595–1600, Act I., Scene 1.)

But in less than half a century *popular* was applied to a man loved by the people for good qualities. Massinger's *Fatal Dowry*, written certainly before 1632, and probably before 1620, furnishes us with the following example of its use: —

"Now you do see her made another man's,
And such a man's, so good, so popular!"

(Act II., Scene 2.)

Yet, as we have seen, Shirley, Massinger's younger contemporary, uses it in a derogatory sense. Clarendon, writing in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, Cavalier as he was, never uses it in such a way, but with almost its proper modern meaning, — generally acceptable to the people. The following passage, in which Clarendon defines his meaning, is interesting: "He [Hampden] was indeed a very wise man, and of great parts, and possessed with the most absolute spirit of popularity, that is, the most absolute faculties to govern the people, of any man I ever knew." (Book VII., vol. iv., p 85, ed 1839.) Even now in the mouths of men of science, men of letters, and philosophers, *popular* conveys a sense of disparagement.

changed; and the apparent change is merely the sign of a political and social revolution. *Popular* means merely that which belongs to, is suited to, or originates with the people, the populace. This sense, in its bare utterance, was at first derogatory. To be popular was to be base, low, contemptible; and to the word *populace* there still clings a derogatory sense, notwithstanding the revolution which has made *popular* a word of approbation. The apparent change in the meaning of the latter word has been brought about by the fact that the people have risen morally and intellectually, and in consideration; so that what wins general, that is popular, favor is now something much higher and better than it was three hundred years ago, when *popular* first came into use. But the word now means rightly just what it did then, — that which pertains to, comes from, or pleases the people; and whether that is intrinsically good or bad depends upon the moral and intellectual condition of the people. For the expression of the relation to the people of that to which it is applied, it is rightly used; but its use to mean absolutely good, or worthy of approbation, is a degradation and confusion of language. A popular measure, meaning a wise measure, or a popular man, meaning an admirable man, is not a whit more defensible than popular pie, meaning good pie. The word, indeed, is never so used by good writers and speakers; but who shall say what a not very distant future may have in store for us in this respect? If good writers and speakers should so use it, we should have to submit to its use, just as we are obliged to put up with many other wrongs. But they are not the less wrong because we are obliged to submit to them; and so the

use of *popular* or of any other word without regard to its essential meaning is a wrong.

There are other words the sense of which is now beginning to be perverted before our very eyes, or rather in our very ears. We see upon the bulletin boards of certain newspapers, day after day, the announcement of an Extra; and newsboys run about in the afternoons crying their "extrys." One day I meekly addressed one of these ragged news Mercurys, who in a street car summoned me to buy his extra, and asked, "My boy, what makes you call that an extra? Tell me what an *extra* is." [Promptly.] "Dunno. [Reflectively.] Extry 's somethin' sells fuss-rate. [Eagerly.] Want one?" I did not want one; but I went through the motions as if I did, and he left the car content with his first experience in making an acquaintance with what some people call philology. His notion of an extra was, I am inclined to think, not very different from that of many newspaper publishers, who announce any number which contains a somewhat unusual supply of "sensational" or "emotional" matter as an extra.

An extra is "something beyond" (the ordinary, understood); and an extra number of a newspaper is one beyond the ordinary and regular publication. The war caused such to be issued from many offices two or three times a week, and even at some crises as many times a day. They were sold by the hundreds of thousands. This continued through four years, with great profit to the publishers of newspapers, who began to regard an extra merely as something that "sold first-rate;" and when the war ended they, unwilling to forego their profits, and perhaps unable to drop at once their habits, announced any regular

number of their papers containing matter supposed to be of unusual interest as an extra. This is another example of those perverted uses of language which often become established in usage, but which usage cannot make right. So long as *extra* is used in regard to a newspaper or in regard to anything else to mean beyond the ordinary, it is rightfully used; but when its contents or its quickness of sale is meant, the use is incorrect. A number may indeed be said to be extra (ordinarily) interesting, or it may sell extra (ordinarily) well; but it is not *an* extra because it "sells fuss-rate."

A similar perversion of language is that of a man who advertised himself somewhat extensively as "The Only True Living Phenomenon." All the world except Mr. Barnum may be willing to pass over his arrogant assumption that he is unique. But none the less we ask of ourselves, What can the man mean? The context enlightens us. According to him, the only true living phenomenon is a man who "performs the stupendous feat of dancing on the rocky road to Dublin for thirty consecutive hours, with only ten minutes' rest, and no sleep." Now although we may not know what dancing on the rocky road to Dublin is, we may admit that the man who can do it for thirty consecutive hours is *a* phenomenon (or extraordinary manifestation) of endurance. But plainly this is not what he means by phenomenon. To him the word has a specific and limited meaning. It means something of which there may be only one; which as to a phenomenon in any true sense is impossible. With just as much meaning, he might have announced himself as the only living parallelogram.

On the other hand, we see a word which I have just used, *unique*, perverted in the opposite direction. In advertisements and catalogues we see books and works of art advertised as "very unique;" which is nonsense. A thing is unique when it is the only one of its kind, whether it is good or bad, ugly or beautiful. But some person, an auctioneer or a catalogue maker, having seen *unique* applied to a beautiful object, ignorantly assumed that the word expressed the beauty of the object, and not the fact that there was no other like it; and hence a misuse of the word, which is already becoming somewhat common in newspapers and in every-day talk.

Another change with which we are threatened, which perhaps has been already thoroughly effected within a few years under our very eyes, is a degrading perversion of the word *fast*, used metaphorically. And here, by the way, having fully in mind how much of language is metaphor, I will remark that misunderstandings and consequent wrongs and griefs unnumbered and unnumberable are due to the metaphorical use of words. As to the proper metaphorical use of *fast*, it appears, despite the writer's protest, in the following interesting passage from Sir Henry Holland's "Recollections of Past Life:"—

"I may mention in the same cursory way another change manifest to me during my London life, and in truth hardly less obvious in the world at large. This is (using the word here in its simpler sense) the increased *fastness* of living incident to all classes and occupations of men. Looking especially at home, we find that the augmented speed and hurry of locomotion (and I can affirm that people walk faster in the London streets than they did when I first knew those great thoroughfares) is carried into every other department

of life, — politics, commerce, literature, science, professional and social existence. The loiterers in life are fewer, and the charm of a tranquil leisure is less appreciated and sought after." (Page 268.)

This fastness of living, when it invades and modifies "social existence," produces in the end fast men and fast women; of which variety of the human species a striking definition was given some years ago by a well-known "swell" professional gambler of New York, a man who might have stood for Mr. John Oakhurst. He was in the witness box, and having spoken in his evidence of a certain gentleman as a fast man, he was asked by the court what he meant by that phrase. "Well, your honor," was the reply, after a little hesitation, "a fast man is a man that has more money to spend than he has time to spend it in." The definition will not bear close analysis; but it was regarded at the time as happily shadowing out the life of the "fast."

When Mr. Thackeray was last here his use of this word brought upon him a rebuff, in this wise. He was introduced to a lady well known in fashionable and literary society, both North and South. He said, "Ah, Mrs. ——, I 'm glad to meet you," and after a moment's pause, "I hear you 're quite fast." "Sir," was the reply, "you should never believe half that you hear. I heard that Mr. Thackeray was a gentleman;" and she turned her back. At the time when this occurred I heard of it with some surprise; for I knew that the lady (who is no longer living) was not only fast, but rather proud of her rapidity; and although in any case Mr. Thackeray's remark was rather brusque, as his remarks were somewhat too apt to be, still there seemed to be nothing in

it meriting such treatment in that particular quarter. It was not until two or three years afterward that I discovered that the cause of the offense was that the word *fast* had come to be used by a certain class of women in a sense known to the lady, but not known to Mr. Thackeray or to me. The fact was, as many of my readers must now know, that Anonyma had sought to grace her peculiar life by calling it fast, and glorying in the name of a fast woman. Then all the poor, low, wretched hirelings of Anonyma's tribe, thinking thereby to raise themselves to the level of their purple-clad sister, called themselves fast, and — hence those tears.

This is an example, passing under our very eyes, of that degradation of language which is one of the vicissitudes to which it is subject. Words almost always sink in grade with the progress of time; they very rarely rise; and one cause of this change in their fortunes is the grasping after the higher sign by those in the lower condition, who think thereby to raise themselves; when all that they can do is to drag down and befoul the distinction that they covet. Perhaps *fast* is not gone into the pit beyond hope of recovery. It were well if it were not; for it expresses in its correct metaphorical use a certain life of headlong, careless gayety; while for its use as a descriptive term for common harlotry there is no justification whatever.

Even as I am writing there comes before me another perversion which might, it is not unlikely, be the beginning of another usage, — unjustifiable but absolute. The own correspondent of one of the most carefully edited and best written newspapers in the country writes of Marshal Bazaine, "The details given of the escape are a little romanesque, but I give

them as related in the most widely accepted version." The writer meant what "the base vulgar do call" romantic. *Romanesque* is a technical term of architecture, and is applied to the debased Roman style of design, which happily yielded to the Gothic, and it has, of course, no possible application to human acts of any kind, or to stories of adventure. But there is just enough likeness and kindred between the two words to lead those who wish, as this writer did, to be very new and fine and elegant, into the use of *romanesque*, and thus to spread a perversion which might easily pass into an established but incorrect and unjustifiable usage.

Some of the advertisements and signs that meet the eye of a city pedestrian show a power of misapprehending and misconstruing language which is astonishing as well as amusing. We have, for example, "Colored Intelligence Office." Now even if it is not the intelligence which is colored, but the office, what is a colored office of any kind? True, we can easily guess what is meant; and so we can in the case of another like sign, "Colored Relief." But what does colored relief really mean? On the west side of New York, about a year ago, I saw a flaming sign, "Home Made Restaurant," which struck me as the most comical arrangement of words that I had ever seen seriously put together. And yet six months had hardly passed before I had a card thrust into my hand, in the street, announcing the opening of a "Home Made Hotel." We may be sure that neither the restaurant-keeper nor the hotel-keeper had the least suspicion that he had been other than quite correct in his use of language.[1]

[1] The following announcement, which appears in the windows of

It may be asked, What need of taking notice of advertisements of mountebanks, the bombast of newspaper bulletins and of newspaper correspondents, the slang of harlots, and the blunders of ignorant lads in eating-houses and those of eating-house keepers, and the like? They are not literature. In reply: First, they are remarked upon as living, present examples of the perversion of language under our eyes, and of characteristic misuses, which possibly may pass into usage. Next, literature is not the source of language, at least to any very great extent. The movement is the other way. And in this country particularly a misuse repeated day after day in an advertisement, by newsboys, or in eating-houses is likely to work itself gradually and not very slowly into usage. Even in the most improbable of these cases, that of *fast*, we have seen that a word perverted to their use by the unmentionable outcasts of society came soon to be recognized only in its perverted sense by ladies of character.

As to such processes, philology is sublimely indifferent; except in so far as to observe them, to record them, to trace their course, and, if possible, to account for them, and to point out the tendency of which they are the manifestations. As to any attempt to check them or to modify them, Pilate could not have washed his hands with more serene disregard of consequences. They are the phenomena which philology observes, the material upon which it works. Philology says, About this time *popular* began to mean good; *transpire*, to take place; *extra*, something that sold rapidly;

furniture shop in Chatham Street, is a jewel of an example of the confusion of thought: —

"*Monthly and Weekly Payments.*

The longest time and easiest terms given by any other house in the city."

inaugurate, to begin; *phenomenon*, a man who dined thirty hours upon the rocky road to Dublin; *sample-room*, a grog-shop; *romanesque*, romantic; *predicate*, to found, to establish; *fast*, harlot-like; *adopt*, to give a child away; and *awfully*, very — and, *je me lave les mains*.

Of course I am speaking only of the very lowest function and the lowest department of that great science which is doing so much to reveal the progress of the world, and which has bound the dominant races of three great continents together into one vast family. But it is none the less true that the function of philology is not to correct or to attempt to guide, but only to observe, to investigate, to record, to infer. So far is this true that it is insisted in quarters of the highest philological authority that even in lexicography and grammar, two of the lowest departments of the science, and two which have to do with the present of language, and perhaps the future, as well as with the past, it is the function of the lexicographer and of the grammarian only to record usage, and not in any way to attempt to guide it.

Whatever may be the function of philologists and lexicographers as to the present and the future of language, there can be no doubt about it as to the past. They must record faithfully and exactly the results of their investigations. Unless this is done, philology is a delusion and dictionaries are a snare. It must have been in ignorance or in forgetfulness of this obviously sound rule in linguistics and lexicography that an esteemed Jewish gentleman requested the publishers of Webster's and Worcester's dictionaries to omit from those books the verb *to jew*; and as surely it was in a deliberate setting aside of that rule that the

yielded to the request. Upon this a contro-
arose, in which several newspapers and persons
involved; and I was asked by more than one of
arties, in terms that I could not without dis-
sy disregard, to give the point some considera-

request laid upon me an unwelcome task. For
the most intelligent, the most polite, the most
orthy, and the most benevolent men that I
ver met, I reckon no small proportion of the
lebrews of my acquaintance. And in particular
had occasion to remark not only their probity
tters of money, but their fairness and kindliness
ling. And yet when I am asked, as I am,
r the word *jew* has been used for longer than
ars as a verb, in the sense of to cheapen, to
I can only express my surprise at the putting
a question. I am unable now to put my hand
ny passages in the writings of English authors
ich the word is so used, because the point never
ggested, or suggested itself, to me for even the
asual consideration, and I cannot spend the
hat would be required in looking them up.
hat there are many such passages in authors
rote in the last century and in the present, I
ry sure; and as to the usage of the present
ation I can bear witness myself to having heard
rb from time to time in my boyhood. The
in which it was used was not exactly either to
n or to cheat, but one between the two, a sense
hich there is no other verb. I remember its
various connections, as "He jewed me down,"
jewed it out of me," and so forth.
t at all strange that a people like the blunt

Anglo-Saxons, who for centuries have prayed, and to this day pray, for "Jews, Turks, heretics, and infidels" (I don't know whether the Roman Catholics are in like manner considerate), and who read in the very Pentateuch that the Jews spoiled the Egyptians, and who have been so long at the mercy of the oppressed Hebrew in money matters, great and small, should have made such a verb as *to jew*? The question is not whether it was just, but whether, the moral forces at work and the relative positions of the two peoples being what they were, the blunter and coarser and more tyrannical could have avoided making this verb, and whether, they having made and used it, philologists and lexicographers can honestly shut their eyes to its existence. The question is answered in the asking. And I think that the Hebrew gentlemen on one side of this discussion have taken the matter much too seriously to heart. The word, if not quite out of use, is rapidly becoming so; and there is no power which will so soon drive it into oblivion as the character and the conduct of the Hebrews themselves, which are likely to be far more effective in that way than the strongest protest or the most rigid expurgation.

As to the mere fact of its presence in standard dictionaries of the English language, it merely takes its place there with other terms which are the word-marks of history, — foot-prints of hatred, of prejudice, of wrong, of error, or of mere circumstance upon the yielding surface of language. Such, for instance, is *sophouse*, a word more nearly synonymous with that in question than any other in the language. It is originally a Turkish word meaning an envoy. It has its English meaning from the misconduct of a Turkish

envoy, or *chiaus*, sent by the Grand Sultan to London in 1603, since which time to chouse (or to Turkish-envoy) a man out of anything has meant to cheat him out of it. But would it be permissible that, because of a protest of a college of Ottoman diplomatists against the presence of this verb in an English dictionary, an English lexicographer should suppress it? Again I think the question is answered in the asking. Of similar origin are the words *jesuitical*, which has no equivalent, as it means something other than crafty, intriguing; *hector*, to irritate by bragging and threatening; *herod*, as a verb in the sense of raving furiously; *caitiff*, meaning originally only a captive; and *miscreant*, which, meaning merely misbeliever, has come to the vilest signification, showing and recording in language the former virulence of religious hatred. It would seem, then, that there is no justification for the omission of the word in question from any English dictionary pretending to thoroughness and trustworthiness, and as surely also that there is none for the use of the word by the present generation.

Upon one other kindred point I will repeat here a remark made in "Words and their Uses," where this subject was considered. There is a sensitiveness as to the use of the word *Jew* in a descriptive sense, which seems to me unreasonable. It is asked, Who ever thinks of mentioning that a culprit is a Roman Catholic, a Presbyterian, or a Methodist? Why, then, say that he is a Jew? Answer: Because when the word is thus used it merely defines the nationality or race of the person to whom it is applied. We frequently see it mentioned that a prisoner is a Frenchman, an Irishman, or a German. Just so, and only

so, it is said that he is a Jew. No reference whatever is made to his religion; no thought is taken of it. His race merely is indicated. For the Jews are still a peculiar people, who, in the words of one of the most distinguished of their family, but not of their faith, "have outlived the Pharaohs." *Hebrew* would be the better word; for that, I believe, according to their usage, carries with it no implication of religious belief. But the Hebrews have been so faithful and have so clung together that to speak of them as men is to speak of them as the people chosen by the One God to proclaim Him to the world; and to touch the pride of the race is to offend every member of it, from the highest to the humblest.

Let them sit as serene as Mordecai. They who have outlived the Pharaohs may outlive philology. Certainly they will live down prejudice and obloquy, of which this verb is evidence reproachful only to its present users.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHANGES IN LANGUAGE.

THAT words change their meaning every intelligent person who observes language and thinks about it well knows. The change is almost always by a gradation, the steps of which are traceable, although they cannot always be clearly defined. Nevertheless, some philologists maintain that a word has, and can have, at least at any one time, but one meaning. Now, if this were the case, it is difficult to see how any change could take place. For if a word has but one meaning, even at one time, it must be used with that meaning by all the three generations that are living in the world at the same time, each of which is advancing gradually to fill the place of the other. If the third generation receives a word with a clearly defined meaning, it would seem that when this third generation becomes the second it must hand that word with the same meaning to the new third, and so on forever. But this is not the case.

It is true, in a certain sense, that, with but few exceptions, words have but one meaning; that is, the radical and essential meaning of the word exists so as to be perceivable, and so as to be a constant guide to its right use. At the same time, most words, if not indeed all, are used with such a degree of vagueness, small though it be, such a lack of perfect consent and identical apprehension among all the users, that possibly no word has exactly the same meaning to any

two persons. Just so it is true that no word has exactly the same sound to any two persons, or is pronounced by any two in exactly the same way. Indeed, it may be said, without so much of paradox as might be generally supposed, that a word exists only for one moment of time, — that at which it is spoken; and that if it is then immediately repeated by the person to whom it is addressed, it is in some respect, either of sound or of meaning, not quite the same word which had just before been spoken.

This, indeed, is not what might be called a practical view of language. In practice we must assume, and we do assume, that a word used at a given time — the present — is in all respects absolutely the same to all its users. That it is not so is certainly true; but this is merely a fact interesting and instructive in the history of language. A striking illustration of the changes of meaning through which a word may pass is a word which I used a few lines above, — *person*. To all who read this book *person* means an individual of the human species; but it has also another meaning, connected with the former, and springing from it: it means the body of one of the human species. Thus, we say that a man has a very fine person; meaning that his body is, in its form and in its expression, satisfying to the eye. We say that a well-bred and delicate woman is nice and dainty about her person; meaning that she is careful and fastidious to preserve her body in perfect cleanliness and freshness, and not to have it brought into contact with anything at which her nice sense revolts.

Now, *person* had originally no such meaning. It meant a mask. The word is of Latin origin, but it is in existence in all of the European languages, with

the same meaning; and in all of them, its use can be traced in an unbroken line from the earliest period at which it is known.

The Greek and Roman theatres were vast unroofed structures, entirely open to the air. The observation of any play of feature in the actors of these theatres would have been quite impossible, and never was attempted. Some distinction between the personages of the drama was, however, necessary, and this led to the use of comic and tragic masks. These two kinds of masks were at last greatly subdivided, and there were masks which belonged to each well known personage of the drama; just as with us there is a received costume for Sir Peter Teazle, for example, or for King Lear, for Malvolio, or for Touchstone.

These masks performed, however, another very important function. The remoteness of the stage from the audience and the openness of the theatre not only prevented the audience from seeing anything except the general appearance, attitudes, and movements of the actors, but also interfered much with their hearing of what was said; for when Sophocles wrote, and Aristophanes and Terence, as also when Shakespeare and even Sheridan had possession of the stage, people actually went to the theatre to listen, — to hear something higher, nobler, grander, than a repetition of their own foolish gabble by other people in fine clothes. This difficulty of hearing was overcome in a measure by a form given to the mouth of the mask, which was greatly widened, and protruded so as to increase the resonance of the voice and carry it forward.

Then, as these masks were subdivided into classes, corresponding to the heavy fathers, the first young

men, the leading ladies, the chamber-maids, and so forth of the modern stage, — as the division was carried even further into the individual distinction of character, — these *personæ* came to be distinctive of the characters of the dramas in which they were used; so that to enumerate the masks, or *personæ*, of a drama was to enumerate the characters that figured in it. This usage, pure and simple, still survives (though with some difference of meaning to the modern mind) in the phrase *dramatis personæ* (that is, persons of the drama), which is generally used as a heading of the list of characters in a play in all Indo-European languages which have a dramatic literature.

Persona, having thus come to mean a fictitious man came at last to mean a real one, reference being at first made, however, to the character of the individual, and to his face as expressive of that character. At last, however, it came to mean a man, that is, a "human" (*homo*, not *vir*); as, for example, we say, "If a person were to do thus and so," meaning if a man or a woman were to do thus and so. (And, by the way, *person* is here just as much a pronoun, because it stands for a man or a woman, as *him* is in the sentence, "To him that hath shall be given," because *him* there stands for "any man.") *Person* having thus come to mean the individual man or woman, it was at last applied to the body of a man or woman; and thus the word, the identical word (with the mere dropping of a final letter), which at first meant something under and through which an actor spoke, came at last to mean the fleshly body of a human — *person*.

This is an extreme example of what may be called

a legitimate or normal change in the meaning of a word; that is, the change has been, so to speak, logical. Each shade of meaning that the word has had has grown naturally and reasonably out of a preceding meaning. To changes in language of this kind there can be no reasonable objection, so long as they are so gradual as not to be confusing. Indeed, it is in vain to strive against any change, normal or abnormal, which is an accomplished fact. In language even more than in anything else that which is must be accepted. Reason may protest, good taste may revolt; but if a word has come to be generally used with a certain meaning, that is practically its meaning in the community in which it is so used; and though the usage may be abnormal, absurd, and even disgusting, there is no help for it. The only time for protest with any hope of success is when the tendency to a vicious change first manifests itself.

Now, it is to be remarked that a great number of the changes in the meaning of words which are not of the character which has just been illustrated in the history of *person*, and all of those which are really objectionable on the ground of reason or of good taste, are the consequences of the use of words by persons who do not understand their meaning. And how many persons there are who daily use words in a strikingly elegant and somewhat overpowering manner, without understanding them, I shall not here undertake to say. Some words, indeed, are of such a character that most persons, even the intelligent and the educated, do not apprehend their real meaning. A word which I have used above, and necessarily used, in the discussion of the word *person*, that is, *individual*, is such a word. *Individual* is used gen-

erally and constantly to mean simply *person*. There are few nouns in the language so nearly synonymous as *individual* and *person;* and yet there are no two whose origin and real significance are more unlike. An individual is merely a thing, an entity, which cannot be divided, a unit; and a man is called an individual merely because he is a single, indivisible, self-contained creature.

The truth is that we are hard pressed in English for a general synonym of *man*, meaning one man; and there seems to be with many people a reluctance to use the simple word *man*, just as with many more there is a reluctance to use as simple and as good a word, *woman*. Hence we have the general adjective *female*, which belongs to all she creatures, made into a noun, as an elegant synonym of *woman*. I have even heard of a man who wished to be gallant, and to give a reason for the gallantry that was in him, assign as that reason that "his mother was a female." So, doubtless, she was; and so was the dam of his mastiff dog. Otherwise we have that common and really unmeaning use of the word *lady*, which is well fitted to excite in some persons a feeling of nausea.

To avoid the use of *man*, meaning a human person of either sex, we say *individual*, which, however, is most often so used by persons whose speech is more elaborately elegant than sensible. The word, however, is perfectly legitimate, and if sparingly used is open to no objection. But how many of those who do thus use it know or think of its real meaning? They accept it without question in the sense in which they are accustomed to hear it; and so, indeed, most words are accepted. Thus it is that speech is the

surest test of education, of breeding, of association. Peter's speech did not more surely betray that he was a Galilean than the speech of every other man shows what was the speech of those among whom he received his breeding; and, as Alexander Ellis says, this speech once thoroughly acquired is, to all intents and purposes, ineradicable. After maturity, the prospect of any material change in this respect is very slight indeed.

But as to our words and their changes. *Individual* is recondite in its real meaning, but, happily, that meaning is almost incapable of misapprehension or perversion. Pretentious writers and speakers may choke us — and themselves — with it, but it would seem that they cannot use it in any other than its proper sense. But there are countless numbers of words which are constantly used with more or less perversion, and this perversion leads to deplorable confusion, and sometimes to misunderstanding which has serious consequences.

In the every-day speech of "America," two words constantly illustrate what has been said before as to the ignorant use of language. These are *predicate* and *transpire*. I have remarked upon their misuse before,[1] and so have others; but the misuse is so flagrant and so common, it is so ridiculous and really so monstrous, that I cannot do better than to mark it again by using it as an illustration of abnormal change in the use of words, a change of a kind quite unlike that which has taken place in *person*; a change which, although it is increasing, should be resisted, and may yet be resisted with some hope of preventing its final accomplishment. It was only the

[1] In *Words and their Uses*.

other day that I heard a judge of one of our highest courts — and that he was an upright judge, an able judge, and one learned in the law I know — say on the bench that a certain action "was *predicated upon*" a certain statute. He might as well have said that at his breakfast he had predicated his butter upon his bread. So we constantly hear one man, generally a man of some intelligence and education, asking another if he means to predicate any action upon such or such a state of things. What he means to ask is whether his friend means to found any action upon such circumstances, or to take any action in consequence of them. What he really says is nonsense, utter, absolute. To any one who knows what *predicate* means, it is difficult to apprehend the condition of mind of a man who talks about predicating an action *upon* anything. To *predicate* means, in simple words, merely to say; or, to use larger words, to utter, to declare. A verb and the words which accompany and modify it are the predicate of a sentence, because they say something, declare something, of the subject and about the object. It will thus be seen that there is not the remotest connection, metaphorical or otherwise, between the real meaning of *predicate* and that which is so commonly given to it in this country, even by judges upon the bench.

And so it is as to a common use of *transpire*. Every day we hear it said, and see it printed, that such and such an occurrence transpired yesterday; the speaker's or the writer's meaning in simple English being that it happened, that it took place, that the thing was done. Now, *transpire* means to breathe through, to pass through, and, in its metaphorical use, which is the only one in which it is received, it means

to pass from secrecy to knowledge, from privacy to publicity. For example, "The decision in the cabinet upon the New York appointments has not yet transpired," or, "The decision did transpire yesterday," — that is, it came to public knowledge yesterday. This is the proper use of the word, and the only one. But some person, having heard it said correctly that such or such a thing transpired yesterday, with the meaning that the knowledge of it became public, supposed that it was a big, elegant word for the simple English "happened" or "took place," and thereafter used it with a pretentious ignorance which has infected many others innocent of his intellectual snobbishness. A like ignorant misapprehension and pretentious misuse has given us the deplorably ridiculous usage of *predicate* which has been above set forth. It is such perversion of language as this — perversion in some one respect or more — that is really worth the serious attention of those who would speak and write good English. This is of more real importance than all those errors in "grammar" or in spelling as to which so many persons seem solicitous. For perversions like this really affect the meaning of what is said, which the few grammatical errors possible in the English language — for example, *us* for *we*, *them* for *those*, *done* for *do* — in no way touch.

I shall in the following chapters give some attention to this part of my subject.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FIRST ENGLISH VERBAL CRITICISM.

As we were slow to write a grammar of our own tongue, even on false, that is on Latin, principles, so were we late in entering upon the field of English verbal criticism. The "Gardens of Eloquence" and "Arts of Rhetoric," and the like, which appeared in the Elizabethan period, had little or nothing to do with the origin, the meaning, or the forms of English words; and even Puttenham's "Arte of English Poesie" touches those subjects but incidentally. It was not until 1770 that the first work of avowed English verbal criticism that is known to me appeared. It was entitled "Remarks on the English Language, in the Nature of Vaugelas's Remarks on the French: Being a Detection of many Improper Expressions used in Conversation, and of many others to be found in Authors. To which is prefixed a Discourse addressed to His Majesty."[1] It was anonymous, but its author's name was Robert Baker. He was not a scholar; knew no Greek and almost no Latin, but seems to have been familiar with French. Nor was he an historical etymologist; for in his day true etymology hardly existed; and as to Sanskrit, its very existence was then known to but a few Western scholars, and its value as a key to Indo-European language structure was unsuspected even by them. He

[1] The address to the king appeared only in the first edition, it having been omitted from the second as too outspoken and presuming.

erred sometimes, — as indeed who does not? — but being a man of good sense, of considerable cultivation, and of good taste in literature and in art, and having given much thought to his subject, he produced a little book which was of real service, and the effect of which is plainly visible upon English speech.

To mere usage and authority Baker did not silently submit; for what he deemed errors in usage were the very subjects of his criticism, without regard to the reputation of the authors in whose works he detected them; and among those whose incorrect use of words or faulty construction of sentences he remarked upon were Locke, Addison, Swift, Bolingbroke, Warburton, Melmoth, Warton, and Harris, the author of "Hermes." But his criticism was always respectful, without asperity or personal sneers at the writers whose errors he pointed out; and in censuring the usage of authors then living, particularly those of minor fame, he often considerately avoided mentioning names, using the phrase "an author" or "a writer," a manifestation of decorum and good nature in which he has not been imitated by some of his successors. His likening of his book to Vaugelas's, published in 1647, does hardly justice to himself; for, unlike Vaugelas, he attempted little in the way of etymology (although, with his assumed prototype, he erred when he did so), and, unlike Vaugelas, he was neither priggish nor pedantic, nor was he a courtier, or a precisian, or a lover of speaking fine. His book consists of one hundred and twenty-seven remarks upon what were then common usages among the best speakers and writers, as any one familiar with the literature of that time well knows; and the justice of his strictures and their effect are evident from the fact that almost all the

solecisms which he censures were erelong abandoned by good writers, and gradually ceased to be heard among educated speakers.

It may be of interest to my readers to know some of the faults in phraseology and of the misuses of words which were thought worthy of remark by the first English verbal critic, one hundred and ten years ago. I shall select not only those which have been altogether given up. Among them are: *as follow* for *as follows*, which still has some support in respectable usage; *chay* for *chaise*, the latter being mistaken for a plural, — as some people who wish to be very correct speak of the *corp* of an army, or of a widow mourning over the *corp* of her husband, or, as I was told by a lawyer, of the *claw* of a statute, to avoid the "bad grammar" of saying "*a* clause;" *ingenuity* in the double sense of ability, cleverness, and of ingenuousness, is pointed out as a blemish, — the latter sense it has lost; *demean* for debase or lessen; *he is came* for *he is come*; *set* for *sit*, and *lie* for *lay*; *propose* for *purpose*; *whom* for *who*, as, "*whom* you would say passed their afternoons," etc.; *'t is him*, *'t is her*, *'t is me*, *'t is them*, for *'t is he*, *'t is she*, *'t is I*, *'t is they*; *mutual* for *common*, an error not infrequent now even among educated people; *either* and *neither* used as plural, as, "neither of them *are*;" *contemptuously* for *contemptibly*, meaning "with contempt," — the latter, being then "most commonly used," has now passed out of use; *fell* for *fallen*, as, *the horse has fell*, which is said to have been then used by "many writers" (indeed, the literature of that time is full of a like use of the past tense of the verb for the participle; it was a usage, but neither sense nor English); *both*, as in *they both met*, and in "those two men are

both equal in capacity," which is justly pronounced nonsense; *agreeable*, *suitable*, *conformable*, for *agreeably*, *suitably*, *conformably*, as, "he performed *agreeable* to his promise," "he conducted himself *suitable* to the occasion," — a usage common in that day, but indefensible, of course, and since then abandoned; *safe* for *safely*, as, "I arrived here *safely*," instead of safe, an error not uncommon now, and among those who are anxious about their "grammar;" *dare* for *dares*, as, "he *dare* not do it" for "he *dares* not," etc., which, although it is mentioned, rightly, as the usage of "numbers of people" and of "many authors," Baker says "appears to me to give a person an air of illiterscy," — but we hear of no offense taken at this assumption of social superiority; *en passant* for *in passing*, justly condemned as sheer affectation; the misplacing of *only*, *either*, and *neither*, as in "Theism can *only* be opposed to polytheism or atheism," and "He was *neither* learned in the languages nor philosophy," which has in its support the usage of centuries of years and centuries of authors, but which has been since seen to be indefensible according to the structure of the English sentence, and which has almost disappeared; the false construction, "*I was going to have done* so and so," which has like "authoritative" support, and which is in like manner indefensible.

Of the subjects of Baker's one hundred and twenty-seven remarks I have room to mention only these, which are not the most important, but which unite some interest with conveniency for citation. To these I will add one other, his condemnation of the phrases *different to*, as, "this is *different to* that," and *different than*, as in the sentence, "I found your affairs had been managed in a *different* manner *than* what I had

advised," which is quoted from Mr
Both these are set down as being neit
sense, which is true of them; and y
them there is the "authority" of lo
usage. They are interesting as being
ish misusages; neither of them havin
a foot-hold in "America." Indeed, th
to be something peculiarly puzzling
cousins in the proper use of *differen*
hardly have fallen into the double co
phrases as *different to* and *different*
latter of which is now heard from som
are not uneducated.[1] In the course of
the former phrase, Baker makes a
shows that he had a just estimate
weight of usage and reason in determi
eties of language. He says, "I kno
often reconciles impropriеties of this
are some cases where it never reconci
ly, and this appears to me to be one.
fore give my vote for *different from*,
ish the expression of *different to.*"
usage if needs must; but he does not
it is inconsistent with reason. He sp
edly, and yet expects his decision to b
as his "vote." He says boldly that h
the expression *different to*; and yet
was even more than this the day of
about questions of verbal criticism,
personal attacks upon him by the user

[1] It is proper that I should say that I did not mea
which is not a common one, until some months afte
the *Nation*, published September 12, 1872, in which
ion that my own criticism of *different to* (in 1854)
demnation of that phrase.

because of an affectation on his part of social superiority, and an implication that they were bred among people whose English deserved banishment.[1]

The reader has probably seen already that between the first book of verbal criticism upon the English language and the last[2] there are some strong points of likeness; and if any "eager, listening enemy" of the author of the latter, on either side of the ocean, is ready to find a likeness between them in their errors and deficiencies, he is welcome to all the comfort he can derive from so doing. Baker's book did not profess to be etymological, or, in the proper sense of the word, philological. Indeed, it could not have been philological with the meaning which the word has now; for the philology of our day, the only true philology, was in Baker's day unknown. And yet his book had a laudable purpose, and, as we have seen, did good, although it is a small affair. No other in its purpose or its pretensions is "Words and their Uses," the author of which hopes for it only that it may effect a like and perhaps a greater good.

> "One language hath no law but use: and still
> Runs blinde, unbridled, at the vulgar's will.
> Another's course is curiously inclos'd
> In lists of Art; of choice fit words compos'd.

[1] *Different to* has continued in use among British writers of education and even of reputation. It is remarked upon in *Words and their Uses*. Here follow instances of its British use in respectable quarters, a century and a half apart.

"The bass viol is an instrument of quite a *different* nature *to* the trumpet." (Addison, Tatler, No 153.)

"The storms and the mists . . . . are strangely *different to* those safer and milder phenomena among which the English people have developed their prosperity," etc. (Buckle, History of Civilization, vol. iii., p. 36.)

Were it desirable or tolerable I could multiply these examples by the score. No eminence or frequency of usage, however, can justify the phrase, while *to* and *different* retain the meaning they have had for centuries.

[2] *Words and Their Uses* is referred to.

One, in the feeble birth, becomming old,
Is cradle-toomb'd: another warreth bold
With the yeer-spinners. One, unhappy-founded,
Lives in a narrow valley ever bounded:
Another with the learned troop doth presse
From Alexander's Altars even to Fez."
(Sylvester's Du Bartas, page 961, ed. 1608.)

CHAPTER XXVII.

COMMON MISUSAGES.

every-day English of "American" life is so ffected by what the "average American" sees his eyes every day, not only in newspapers, but ce advertisements, and even on signs, that mis- of the lowest origin rise not unfrequently into nce with people of tolerably decent habits of and conduct. It is only lately that I have dis- how very large the class is that never reads a ardly even a novel of the slightest kind; and clined to think that I yet do not quite know ny people there are in New York, that dress e comfortably, and have "money in the bank," dependent entirely, for the little intellectual nce which they assimilate, upon their morning eir evening newspaper. I have myself ob- how slang and, what is very much worse, — ng has in some cases a peculiar pungent mean- vulgar, slovenly words and phrases creep into ong people who would be angry or ashamed were told that their speech was vulgar and y. I shall therefore remark, briefly and un- lically, upon some examples of this kind of lay language.[1]

e is a strange way of making a verb and then

[1] hundred and fifty common misuses of words are remarked upon in *d their Uses*, where they are arranged alphabetically, but such emed not required for the comparatively few instances in this ntary chapter.

a participle from a noun in *ion*, of which the most familiar and offensive example used to be *donate*, from *donation*; but now *resurrect*, from *resurrection*, has followed it into a certain vogue. I found a cabinet minister, the other day, telling about a thing being *resurrected*. Why he was not satisfied with *raised* or *raised up*, or *revived*, which have perfectly answered the purposes of all good writers and speakers and of the common people (and it is the best words and phrases only that do both), I cannot understand. It is to be hoped that his example will not bring the word into yet more general use. Worse than *resurrect*, however, is Southey's *resurrectionise*, used perhaps jocosely: "At least half these gentlemen are not included in the common collections of the poets, and must be *resurrectionised* at Stationer's Hall." (Letters, vol. i., p. 270.) Nor can Frith's *revelate* for *reveal* be regarded with any favor: "He saw it in faith . . . . plainly *revelated* unto him, albeit he were dead many hundred years before it was actually fulfilled and *revelated* unto the world." (The Body of Christ, 1533, ed. 1829, vol. iv., p. 327.)

Another queer use of verbs which is coming into vogue is the perversion of their meaning from a proper object. In a paragraph before me I find mention of a man who "feared to be embezzled;" and I have read a report in which it was said that a bank "was defalcated." This is almost equal to the case of the man who announced that "last night a great bugglery was committed, and I am the gentleman that was buggled." I have seen the word *burgled*, made from *burglary*, like *resurrect* from *resurrection*, used, if not with perfect seriousness, at least in such a way that it would be sure to mislead uninstructed speak

ers. Now, it is to be observed that there is no "bad grammar" in this. The sentences, "He was embezzled," "The bank was defalcated," will "parse" perfectly, and so will "He was burgled." The error in the first case, as in the last, is merely that of the ignorant perversion of the meaning of a word. A man's money may be embezzled, but he cannot; and so with a bank and its money.

The verb *can* is now too commonly used, even by persons who should know better, erroneously in the sense of *may*. A mistress will say to her servant, "You can go out," meaning to give her permission to go out, the proper word to express which is *may*. There was no question whether the servant *could* go out, that is, had the ability to do so. If the doors had been barred, or the girl had broken her leg, then it might have been said to her, "You can't go out;" but permission is granted by *may*. When a schoolboy puts up his hand and says, "Please, can I g'out?" he means, and should say, "May I go out?" The distinctions between *may*, *can*, *shall*, and *will* are of great value, and should be carefully preserved. When these verbs are used in what the grammarians call their auxiliary position, they enable us to express varieties of meaning which are inexpressible in the corresponding tenses of synthetic languages. As to the loss that we should suffer by the confusion of the meanings of these verbs, that will be seen by any person who reflects a moment how it would be if we could no longer say, I may do so and so to-morrow if I can; I might do so if I could; I would do so if I should.

Avocation is a word very much misused in the sense of work, business, occupation, even by writers of in-

telligence and education. The examples at my hand are very numerous. It will be found thus misused not only in the pages of such journals as the London "Times," the "Saturday Review," "The [London] Spectator," and the "Pall Mall Gazette," which represent the best English of the day, but in the books of writers of high reputation.

The following instance is from the "Pall Mall Gazette:" "They invited a number of barristers of fully-established reputation to help them, they attached salaries to the new chairs, and arranged the duties of the professors so as to interfere as little as possible with their professional avocations." Now a barrister's professional duty is his *vocation;* matters which call him away from these duties are avocations. Thus Falstaff says to the Prince, when he gibes him about the proposed robbery, "'T is my vocation, Hal." *Vocation* means, simply, calling. One man's calling is agriculture, another's trading, another's shoe-making; and these are their vocations. Thus the Book of Common Prayer, with that duplicate expression of the same thought in an English word and a Latin one which was common of old, speaks of a man's vocation and calling.[1] How it was that *avocation* came to be used in a sense directly opposed to its real meaning I cannot, of course, say positively; but I have no doubt that it was merely through that pretentious ignorance or that slovenliness in speech, to which we owe the greater number of the perversions of language. The misusage began a long while ago. See, for example, the following passage from a writer of the rank of Defoe, who wrote nearly two centuries since: —

[1] It is remarkable that this use of two synonymous words, one Latin and the other English, appears in the title of the first printed English book *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, printed in 1477.

"Wherefore I think to write to the learned Dr. B., imploring his most sublime haughtiness that when his other more sublime *avocations* of pedantry and pedagogism will give him an interval," etc. (History of the Devil, page 238, ed. Bohn.)

There is no room left for doubt as to what Defoe meant, for the Dr. B. was to get "an interval" from the "avocations." Now, Defoe, by his misuse of *avocation*, said exactly what he did not mean to say. He meant Dr. B.'s *vocations*, or, better, his vocation. A man's vocation is his calling, his trade, work, business, occupation. The occupations of his leisure hours, or those which call him away from his work, are avocations: *vocare*, to call; *a-vocare*, to call away.

And yet a writer so learned and so painstaking about his style as Buckle continually misuses this word, thus: —

"At all events, between these two professions men were necessarily divided; the only *avocations* were war and theology." (History of Civilization, vol. i., chap. iv.)

". . . . and this forced interruption encourages among a people an irregularity and instability of purpose which makes them choose the wandering *avocations* of a shepherd rather than the more fixed pursuits of agriculture." (Vol. i., chap. viii.)

And here I will remark that this use of *avocation* by Defoe, and since his time by hundreds of good writers, such as Buckle, so that nowadays it has become almost the general usage, does not and cannot make it right. There goes something besides the mere repetition of a word in a certain sense to the making of normal language. As *vocation* means calling, *a-vocation* cannot properly mean calling, but must properly mean a calling away, a thousand De-

foes and Buckles to the contrary notwithstanding. The use of it in the former sense is as indefensible as the use of *demerit* for *merit* by some of the best English writers before 1625. And the word itself might well be dropped, whether used rightly or wrongly, in favor of a plainer and simpler one. Thus, where, in "The Cruise of the Galatea" (page 220), it is said, "The laborers are able in the hottest weather to *carry on their usual avocations* without danger," it might much better have been written that they were able to "do their daily work," etc.

Couple. This word is another example of a general misusage which has extended through not less than three centuries, and of which many instances may be found in the works of the best writers. The following passage from the "Saturday Review" is an example of the misusage in question: "In broad daylight she met a *couple* of men carrying a *couple* of sacks." (February 23, 1878.) The incorrectness of this use of the word is made very manifest by the following example of its correct use in the very same journal, and, in fact, in the same article: "The real master of the establishment is the stiff and exacting Colonel Demarcay, who pensions her husband, pays her dressmaker's bills, and, in short, maintains the young *couple*, on condition of their absolute subservience." The man and the wife are properly called a couple, because they are joined or coupled together. The men carrying the sack were not coupled, nor were the sacks coupled. There were two men carrying two sacks. It is not easy to find a reason for this general misuse of a word of two syllables for a word of one, unless, indeed, we find it in a dislike of plainness and simplicity. I have remarked upon this mis-

usage before, but it occurred to me as another (and yet a stronger) example of general error, such as that last remarked upon. One illustrates the other. Nor shall I be deterred from the indication of error because I may have censured it at some time before.

Talk is now very generally misused for *speak*, and by many persons who should know better. Thus, Trollope writes: —

"The fact is, George, we are rather a divided house here. Some of us *talk* Italian and some English. I am the only common interpreter in the house, and I find it a bore." (Popenjoy, chap. xxx.)

"But they are quite willing to think that I and my wife ought to be damned because we *talk* Italian, and that my son ought to be disinherited because he was not baptized in the English Church." (Popenjoy, chap. xxiv.)

And even Thackeray has

"I *talked* Latin faster than my own beautiful *patois* of Alsatian French." (Paris Sketch-Book, ed. 1869, page 126.)

In all these cases the proper word is *speak*. The people spoke Italian, and they spoke Latin. A man may speak Italian, or English, or any other language, very well, and yet talk nonsense. People speak to each other in the street, or as they pass each other in the dismal promenade of evening parties; and they sometimes stop and talk. *Speak* corresponds to the French *parler ; talk*, to *causer*. A child may be able to speak, that is, say *mamma* and *papa*, but not to talk, that is, to put words together intelligently. The two words may seem to overlap each other, even in correct usage; but it will be found, I believe, that they do not. At any rate, the misusage in question is flagrant.

Fire is very generally misused in a way of which the following instance is an example: —

"Then came the aboriginal games, in which Dick-a-Dick appeared in his clever trick of dodging a cricket-ball. . . . An incessant *fire* at him was kept up at a distance of only twenty yards, but he fended them all off most adroitly" (Cruise of the Galatea, page 374.)

And we hear and see continually such phrases as, "He fired a stone," and I remember even, "He fired a glass of water in his face." Indeed, *fire* has come to be used by the majority of people, in a loose, slovenly way, for both *throw* and *shoot*. Its misuse came about at first by a use of it as a synonym of *shoot*. When hand fire-arms came into use, and very slowly superseded the bow, the musketeer carried a lighted match (by which the poor fellow often blew himself up with his own powder), and the word of command was, "Give fire!" that is, put fire to the powder.[1] This was soon naturally abbreviated to "fire." Hence *fire* came to be used, pardonably as to arms, for *shoot*. But the last line of "Hamlet" is, "Go bid the soldiers shoot," — Fortinbras's command for the military salute to the corpse of the Prince.[2] This use of *fire* for *shoot* has gone on, until we now hear archers talk of "firing an arrow," a somewhat absurd expression. The next stage of perversion is the use of *fire* to express the projection of any missile; for example, to fire a stone, instead of to throw

[1] Here is a passage, whimsically in point, from the last of the Elizabethan dramatists: —

Jacomo. He'll be drunk presently.

Bombo. Bottle, in battle 'ray! Present! Give fire! [*Drinks.*] So! As you were. [*Sets down the flask.*]

(Shirley, The Royal Master, Act II., Scene 1.)

[2] Salutes used always to be fired with shotted guns.

a stone, to fire a cricket-ball, instead of to throw one. Erelong we may hear of a fireman firing water at a fire; for there is no knowing what may be in store for us.

Calculate (as to which see "Words and their Uses") is another word similarly misused by a very large number of speakers not unintelligent or uneducated. To calculate is to compute. An astronomer calculates by a toilsome and vastly comprehensive mathematical process the orbit of a planet. A business man calculates the probable cost of an enterprise. Hence, anything which is very carefully designed or adapted to a certain purpose may be said to be calculated for it. But the word, or at least the participle, is very commonly used to mean, merely, fitted, suited, apt. I find even in the London "Times" the following sentence: "The stuff itself was well calculated to burn, though of course it was not there for such a purpose." This is almost a contradiction in terms. The stuff was not calculated to burn; no one had contrived it for that purpose, or wished it to burn; it was merely apt to burn, liable to take fire.

Accident is a word which too commonly suffers a like perversion. It is used as if it meant a wound. Thus I read in an advertisement the very doubtful assertion that "witch-hazel cures accidents and injuries of all kinds." Now, accidents are of countless kinds; among them are the falling of steeples, the explosion of steam boilers, the collision of railway trains, and the falling of fat into the fire; all of which, it may safely be said, are quite uncurable, even by witch-hazel. A wound, or a burn, or a bodily injury is not an accident, but it may be, and it generally is, the result of an accident. But such is the

ignorant and vague apprehension of the meaning of the word by people who would be in a fidget about their grammar that I have heard it said that "they were carrying accidents into the hospital;" *accidents* being used to mean wounded men who were injured by accident!

Every once in a while is a phrase most often heard from ladies' lips, but too often from men, and sometimes seen in print. In this phrase *every* qualifies all that comes after it; and what is a *once in a while?* The nonsense is apparent. This phrase is, I believe, an Americanism of indisputable origin and usage. At least, I have never heard it except from American speakers, or met with it except in American writers. It is a perversion by transposition of "once in every little while," which, although not a very good phrase, being itself a perversion of "once in a little while," is yet comprehensible. But a moment's reflection will show any one who can understand the use of words that "*every once* in a little while" is an absurd and meaningless phrase, — an illustration of the absoluteness of logical position in the English language.

Another phrase commonly misused is *make way* — a phrase idiomatic, although found in other languages. It is misused thus: "He snatched up the cloth and made way with it." What the writer meant to say was that the thief made *away* with the cloth. When he began to run, he doubtless made way as fast as he could. To make way is to move more or less rapidly, to dispatch; to go off with is to make *away* with. Hence the phrase "He made away with himself" for "committed suicide," which is not unfrequently perverted into "made way."

The mention of suicide reminds me that I saw the other day, in a newspaper of very high standing, a mention of two suicides, "one successful and the other unsuccessful." I wonder what kind of event an unsuccessful suicide is. A few repetitions of such a nonsensical blunder as this, and hundreds of people will assume that *suicide* means an attempt upon a man's own life.

Some of the most ludicrous mistakes in language that are made are to be seen where they are likely to do the most harm — in the street railway cars. Thus, when it is announced that "children more than five years will be charged full fare," every indignant father of a strapping lad or lass swallows with his wrath a lesson in bad English. He does not consider the announcement in the light of the query how a child can be more than five years, any more easily than it can be more than five apples or more than five pairs of shoes. He regards it in the light only of an extra five cents, and the phrase is seared into his memory. A child is more or less than five years *old*, or *of age*.

Another of these announcements holds a bad lesson before the public eye daily. "Passengers are earnestly requested not to hold conversation with either conductor or driver." Now, this implies that there are two conductors and two drivers, and that the passengers are asked not to talk, or, in elegant phrase, "hold conversation," with either of them. The simple introduction of *the* rectifies the phrase: "not to hold conversation with either *the* conductor or *the* driver." The error of which this is an example is a common one; *the* is omitted after *either* and *or* from slovenliness or ignorance, and the result is not only

slovenly English, but actual confusion, which, in laws, for instance (and most of our laws of late years are drawn up in a very inexact, slipshod way), is productive of serious injury.

In and *into* are very commonly confused; but of the two, *into* is much the greater sufferer, as some people seem inclined to drive it out of the language. Nothing is more common than to hear a man say that he got *in* a 'bus or car, meaning that he got *into* it. When he had got *into* the 'bus, then he was *in* it. So, some people will say that they have not looked *in* a book for a long while, meaning that they have not looked *into* a book.

The difference in the signification of these two words is that *into* implies tendency toward, if not motion; *in* implies confinement, limitation. We walk into a room, and then are in it; we look into an affair; we see into a scheme; a fish swims from a brook into a pond, and then swims in the pond. But the distinction between the uses is sometimes not clear. I had marked this sentence, as I read it in Trollope's "American Senator," chapter iv., as erroneous in the use of *into*: "Seated back on the sofa was Mr. Ribbs, the butcher, who was allowed *into* the society as being a specially modest man." But on reverting to it I am not sure that it is wrong. Received or admitted into the society would certainly be right; and I am inclined to think that the unpleasant jar on my ear was produced by the unhappy use of the word *allowed*.

Directly. The misuse of this word, in the sense of when or as soon as, is British; but as bad example is contagious, I remark upon it anew, although it is considered in "Words and their Uses." *Directly*

means straightway, and so in the shortest time; senses from which there is no right road to the sense of when or as soon as. And yet the most eminent British writers (with a few exceptions, among whom is Macaulay) use the word in the latter sense. Buckle's pages are peppered with it. For example, "... but Richelieu, *directly he was called* to the council, determined to humble that house in both its branches." (History of Civilization, vol. ii., chap. i.) "The celebrated work of De Lolme on the English constitution was suppressed *directly it appeared*." (The same, chap. v.) Buckle's misuse of the word is so frequent that I stopped making memorandums of it. Cardinal Newman also writes, "... but that *directly they are loved* for their own sake, then they return to their original dust." (Sermons on Subjects of the Day, No. XVII.) This perversion is of recent origin, and will probably be corrected by criticism.

Anticipate is commonly, it may almost be said generally, misused in the sense of expect, look for. Thus: I anticipate going to Albany to-morrow, I anticipate seeing her this evening. Now, *anticipate* means, by derivation, to take beforehand, and its proper meaning in English is to take first possession of, or to take before the proper time. If a man's note is due on the 30th, and he pays it on the 25th, he anticipates its due payment. A man may anticipate another in doing something which both intend doing; that is, he may succeed in doing it first. But his looking forward to doing either of these acts is not anticipation; it is expectation.

Particle is strangely used to mean "at all," or "in any degree," as we very colloquially use *bit*. There is a man who walks up and down Broadway bearing

a picture which represents a triumphant dentist fiendishly brandishing in the air a forceps containing a huge, three-fanged, uprooted double tooth, while he demands of a meek individual in a large chair, "Did it hurt you?" to which the meek individual replies, from the chair, "Not a particle." He meant "not at all," or, more simply, "no." *Particle* is, through the Latin, a diminutive of *part*, and means the smallest possible division of matter; and it is so material and mechanical in its signification that the use of it to express degree, and especially degree of pleasure or pain, is, to say the very least, in the worst possible taste. Its only support is in the common phrase, "not a bit." But the image presented to the general mind by *bit* has caused the word expressing it to be used in almost all languages as it is in English. It seems to be a metaphor which the child invents and the man retains.

Remember and *recollect* are used interchangeably, as if they were synonyms, and the preference seems to be most generally given to the latter.[1] They are not synonymous, and the distinction between them is an important one, which ought to be preserved. That which lies in our memory at hand, ready for use at any moment, we remember; but we also really do remember much that does not lie at hand, that we cannot find in our mind's storehouse on the instant, and this we try to recollect, that is, to re-collect. Therefore, the expression, I don't remember, but I will try to recollect, is not only correct, but it sets forth a condition of the mind expressible in no other way, and to speak of which we have frequent necessity. The ability to do so will be impaired, if not

[1] *See Words and their Uses.*

altogether lost, when the distinction between the two words is done away.

Next. A correspondent asks, "What is the meaning of the word *next* when used to designate a future day of the week?" and gives as one example of a doubt as to its meaning, "To-day is Thursday, and if I should agree to be in New York next Saturday, I should expect to be there the day after to-morrow; but I find that many people would think that I meant to be there just one week later;" and as another, "Divines will announce that there will be such or such a meeting next Saturday week, when they mean that the meeting will be held on the second Saturday after the giving of the notice." The first of these uses or apprehensions is wrong, the second right. *Next* means, merely, nearest. It is the superlative of *near*, — near, nigher, next. Its meaning has not changed a whit for more than a thousand years. We say that a minor brings a suit "by his next friend;" that is, by his nearest friend. The next house to our own is simply the nearest house. If we are speaking on Thursday, "next Saturday" means the nearest Saturday to the day of our speaking; that is, the day but one after. I have observed the misuse mentioned by my correspondent, and I cannot explain it except by attributing it to mere blundering misapprehension. Next Saturday is the Saturday of next week only when we speak on Saturday. Next Saturday week, however, is "short" for a week from next Saturday; and therefore, of course, does mean the second Saturday after the day of speaking.

Memoranda is a word which lingers far too long among us. It is the Latin plural of *memorandum*, which word has been so very long in our language

that it surely is naturalized. It has far more right to be treated as an English word than a score of others to which no one would dream of affixing a Latin termination. A correspondent, a lad whose Christian name is Poins (which touches me nearly), sends me a plea for *memoranda*. But a fellow named Poins should know that nearly three hundred years ago another fellow, named Falstaff, whose English is unexceptionably good, said *memorandums*, in a passage of "2 Henry IV.," Part I., Act IV., Scene 3, which is here somewhat unquotable.

Their is very commonly misused with reference to a singular noun. Even John Ruskin has written such a sentence as this: "But if *a customer* wishes you to injure *their foot* or to disfigure it, you are to refuse *their* pleasure." (Fors Clavigera, No. 77, May, 1877.) How Mr. Ruskin could have written such a sentence as that (for plainly there is no slip of the pen or result of imperfect interlinear correction in it), or how, it having been written, it could be passed by an intelligent proof-reader, I cannot surmise. It is, perhaps, an exemplification of the straits to which we are driven by the lack of a pronoun of common gender meaning both he and she, his and her. But, admitting this lack, the fact remains that *his* is the representative pronoun, as *mankind* includes both men and women. Mr. Ruskin might better have said, "If a customer wishes you to injure his foot you are to refuse his pleasure." To use "his or her" in cases of this kind seems to me very finical and pedantic.

Ascetic is a word which, if used at all, must be used, it would seem, in its proper sense. But, unfortunately, there are many such words which are per-

verted by ignorant affectation. I have heard *ascetic* used as if it meant elegant, refined; and here is an example of such a use, or something like it, from a newspaper of high standing. Of General Fremont's library it is said that "it was such a collection of books as a man of General Fremont's ascetic tastes would select." Now *ascetic* really means austere, rigid. A hermit's habits of life are ascetic. What the writer of the sentence just quoted meant by it we can only guess at; but we guess æsthetic.

Identified is strangely misused by combining it with incongruous words. We most frequently hear it now in the phrase, such or such a man was "prominently identified" with such a party or such a business interest. Now, to any one who knows and thinks what *prominently* means and what *identified* means, the idea of using the former to qualify the latter is absurd. Identity is sameness; prominence is a standing out or apart from. To say that a man is identified with a cause or a business is of itself a coarse overstraining of metaphor; but to say that he is prominently identified with it is past the extreme limits of tolerable license.

Balance. It is, perhaps, hopeless in a community so given up to trade as ours is to check the use of the word *balance* in the sense of that which is left. People speak even of the balance of a day, of spending thus or so the balance of their time, or even the balance of their lives. This to my taste is hideous English. *Balance* means, first, scales; next, what will keep scales evenly poised; and, finally, by metaphor, the sum which equalizes an account. But it does not mean that which is left of anything, whether of a day or of a life-time; to express which we have

rest, *remainder*, and *residue*. It would be better to say, what is left, or even what is over, than the balance. I have remarked upon this misuse before, so have others; but it cannot be too often or too severely censured.

Lengthened. Why *lengthened* is misused as it is I cannot see. For example, in the London "Times:" "On Sunday afternoon the Earl of Beaconsfield had a lengthened audience of her Majesty at Windsor." What the writer meant was that the audience was long; and why he did not say so is a puzzle. If an audience is, by custom or appointment, to be an hour, or a quarter of an hour, or five minutes long, and then for any reason it is made an hour and a half, or twenty minutes, or ten minutes, it is lengthened. But if there were no limit of custom or appointment, and it should last all day, it is only a long, or a very long, audience. And as of audiences so of sermons, and the like. We hear of lengthy sermons, when what is meant is merely long or very long sermons, or, to use a very expressive old English word, longsome sermons, — a word strictly analogical in its expressiveness, *longsome* being formed from *long*, as *wearisome* is from *weary*.

We are beginning to see in advertisements now the phrase, *table-board;* for example, "table-board one dollar a day." If not an incorrect, it is a very droll, combination of words. For *board* thus used means that which is placed upon the board or table. Board is one thing, and lodging is another; so that we see signs, "board and lodging." There are few words in our language so absolutely synonymous as *board* and *table*, the one being the English, the other the Romance, name for the same thing; so that *table-*

rd is simply table-table or board-board. Now, s use of *table-board* is an example of the history ich often is embodied in words and phrases. It ows that in New York, and in other American cities ich delight in being little imitation New Yorks, ging-houses are passing away, and that *board* means h board and lodging, unless it is otherwise ex-ssed. The phrase *table-board* would sound very ngely to British ears. It is thus far an Ameri-ism; almost a New York-ism.

It is, perhaps, as hopeless to check the prevalence of n the street" as that of *balance* for *rest*, as to both which errors something is said in "Words and ir Uses." The proper phrase, both logically and good usage, is "*in* the street." A house even, hough it *fronts on* a street, *is in* a street. There a noise *in* the street; people walk *in* the street, not the street. A street is not a surface; it is a pas-ge-way, in or through which people go. True, we eak of a man being *on his way* or *on the road* to h a place, but we do not thereby mean that he s physically upon a certain surface of earth called road: *on* is then used idiomatically, as it is in the rases, "on the run," "on the jump," "on the gal-p." This bad and pedantically literal use of *on*, hich is becoming prevalent here, but not in England, I believe, a Scotticism. At any rate, I find it used Carlyle: "Some said they had seen her *on* the reet, some *on* the roofs of the adjoining houses." Wilhelm Meister, ii. 4.) "*On* the street they heard e cry of fire." (The same, v. 13.) Here the second e of the word is correct, and it illustrates the incor-rectness of the first use and of the third; for Carlyle rely did not mean that the girl was on the street

as he did that she was on the house-tops. To say that a noise is on a street is a deplorable perversion of language.

Don't for *does n't* is one of the commonest errors in speech. *Does n't*, the contracted form of "does not," is properly used, of course, with he, she, or it; because we say he does, she does, it does. *Don't*, the contracted form of "do not," belongs to I, we, you, and they. "He don't" is one of the few violations of grammatical form possible in English. I am piteously entreated, by more than one correspondent, to say that "he don't" is bad English, and therefore I say it. But "he don't" for "he does n't" is, I suspect, an example rather of phonetic degradation than of ignorance or defiance of grammar, like *I'd* for *I'ld*, the proper contraction of *I would*; *I'd* being the contracted form of *I had*. Therefore, "He don't" does n't grieve me as it grieves my correspondents.

Some of these take such matters more to heart than I do. For example, here is one who tells me he is so aggrieved by the use of *less*, in such a phrase as "less than nine letters," that "within ten years" he has written "some hundreds of protests against the use of the adjective of quantity for that of number, and not a few to that most rare and exquisite of all critical journals, the 'Evening Post;' but," he wails, "all to no purpose." I am sorry for him, although I cannot imagine a man so afflicted by the use of *less* for *fewer* that he should write hundreds of letters about it. Strictly, he is right, of course; but the matter is not one about which a man should rend his heart, or even his garments.

Every. A misuse of the word *every* is worth no

…ER, — the using it in a plural sense, which is very …mon. Thus: "Every person rose and took their …ve," instead of "All rose and took their leave." … word is thus constantly misused by persons who …ld not be guilty of saying, for example, "Every …e *think* so and so," instead of "Every one *thinks*," …c. But even a writer like Mallock has "Every one …oked about *them* silently." (New Republic, Book …I., chap. i.) In such sentences, however, the use …f this word is made difficult by the lack of a singular …ronoun of dual sex. On the occasion referred to by …Ir. Mallock there were women present as well as …nen. He did not wish to write, "Every one then …ooked about him or her," nor did he wish to exclude …he women from his assertion. Nevertheless, this is …o warrant for the conjunction of *every* and *them*. …His meaning would have been expressed by "*all* …ooked about them," etc.

On to. The misuse of this combination in the …ense of *upon* is common and is growing. Mr. Trol…lope, whose English is usually good and idiomatic, al…though not precise, is a constant offender in this re…spect. Here are two instances in a single sentence:

"It was a large, brick building facing *on to* the village …treet, ... but with a front *on to* its own ground." (An …Eye for an Eye, chap. v.)

The latter of the two is very flagrant: in both the …proper word is *upon*. So we hear it said that a cat …jumped on to a chair. The cat jumped upon, that is …*up on*, the chair. She could not jump *on to* the chair; …for when she was once on the chair she could not …jump to it. To jump on a chair is to be on the chair …and jump there. It is like dancing *on* a tight rope, or …walking *on* stilts, or standing *on* a platform.

Possessives. Quite lately there has come into vogue in the newspapers a use of the possessive case which seems to me objectionable. For example, "A Pacific steamer's loss," "Brooklyn's murder," "John Smith's robbery." In all such cases a clear, clean use of language requires a preposition instead of the possessive case; for what is meant is the loss of a Pacific steamer, the murder in Brooklyn, the robbery of John Smith. A Pacific steamer's loss is the loss that has befallen a Pacific steamer, — it might be of a screw, or a smoke-stack, or what not. John Smith's robbery really means the robbery that John Smith has committed; and we naturally expect to hear what or whom he robbed. As to phrases like Brooklyn's murder, they are simply in the worst taste possible, very bad English. For, although a city might metaphorically be said to possess a murder "of its ain particular," as the Scots would say, and although instances of such a use of the possessive might be produced from poetical writing, this is no justification, but rather the contrary, of a like usage in every-day cold-blooded speech or writing. Language is so much learned from newspapers nowadays that this growing solecism demands notice.

Expect. I have heretofore remarked upon a too common misuse of this word in the simple sense of think or believe. This misuse has become very common; nor is it confined to uneducated speakers or to untrained writers. I very recently observed two instances of it in Mr. Mallock's remarkable book, "The New Republic:" —

"'I *expect*,' said Miss Merton, 'that we are naturally more introspective than men.'" (Book III., chap. ii.)

"For, in the first place, I *expect* it requires certain sub

ural advantages of position to overlook life." (Book III., chap. ii.)

Mr. Mallock is not only a thoughtful writer and a brilliant one, but he is a scholar; and he knows as well as any one can know that *expect* means to look forward to, and not to think, or to believe, or guess, or surmise, or conjecture. And yet, meaning to express the idea think or believe, he wrote *expect*, — wrote it intentionally and by no blunder, being led into his error by the mere effect of contamination. He heard people around him use *expect* in that way, and he read it in newspapers and in magazines, and his knowledge did not prove a sufficient disinfectant. His example shows the use of such verbal criticism as this, which otherwise would be trivial business.

Remunerate. A common error in the use of this word shows a misapprehension of its meaning, which confounds it with *reimburse*. For example, this passage from a respectable newspaper: "His assets are very large, though in the present condition of trade it is thought they could not be made remunerative." Now, a trade, or even a profession, is remunerative to the person engaged in it; that is, it makes him a good return for his outlay of time and money. But assets, however valuable, cannot be remunerative. It might properly be said that it is thought that in the present condition of trade the assets, although large, will not *reimburse* the creditors.

Plenty is very commonly misused to mean many, enough in numbers. It is not only heard thus colloquially, but may be found in the books of good writers. For example, "*Plenty* of the gang told me. They all know it." (Miss Martineau, Game Law Tales, vol. ii., p. 74.) *Plenty* means a sufficient

or a large supply of anything, as, plenty of corn and wine. It does not refer to numbers. "Plenty of the gang" reminds me of the speech of a youngster who said that in a certain place there was an "abundance of boys." Many of the gang, or enough of the gang, would have been right.

Executed. In "Words and their Uses" I declared and showed that the general use of this word now and for a long time past, to mean put to death in pursuance of sentence of a court or other superior power, is really absurd, and is tolerable only on the ground of custom. When I did this, I of course knew very well that I was attacking a usage quite three hundred years old, which has the support given by the example of the best writers. Because of that usage, however, none the less it is objectionable as a damaging and confusing perversion of language. Of this Buckle furnishes the following striking illustrations. Describing Philip II. of Spain's cruel persecution of Protestants, he says: —

"He ordered that every heretic who refused to recant should be burned. If the heretic did recant, some indulgence was granted; but having been once tainted, he must die. Instead of being burned, he was therefore to be *executed*." (History of Civilization, vol. ii., chap. viii.)

That this use of the word was not one of those casual slips to which all writers are subject, and from which they are often saved by the care of correctors of the press, is shown by the recurrence of the word in the same strange sense, and even in a more pronounced manner, on the next page: ". . . . an estimate probably not far from the truth, since we know from other sources that in one year eight thousand were either *executed* or burned."

Here "either" very distinctly and purposely opposes burning to execution. But whether the heretic were put to death by burning or in any other way, it was in execution of a sentence. The sentence might have been that he should be burned, or be hanged, or be beheaded, or be tortured to death. If he were executed in one case, he was executed in any other. There is no form of death that is specifically execution. Buckle probably means that those who were not burned were either hanged or beheaded; but there is no warrant or justification for such a limitation of the sense of the word *execute*. A capital execution is sometimes by shooting. We have here an example of the confusion which is a natural and almost an inevitable consequence of the arbitrary, abnormal use of words, — an example which illustrates the truth of the doctrine that mere usage should not be accepted as a final law in language. This instance and others which I have given, and yet others which might be produced, from Buckle's writings are the more important and impressive, not only from the fact of his eminence as a writer, but from consideration of the other fact that he was a very learned and extremely careful writer, and one who had (as his diary informs us) made style a special study. Yet he was neither so correct nor (apart from the thoughts which he presented) so impressive a writer as other writers whose style is unlabored.

Pocket-handkerchief and *neck-handkerchief*. No error in usage is too trifling to be made the subject of verbal criticism; but I should not make these compounds the subject of remark had I not been requested to do so, which, indeed, is true of much

that I have written of this kind. *Kerchief* is an Anglicized and corrupted form of the French *couvre-chef*, an antiquated word, the last syllable of which is the obsolete *chief*, the head. I find among my memorandums an interesting passage from the ancient French poem, "Le Roman de la Rose," written about A. D. 1310, which shows both words, the compound and the simple, in striking juxtaposition:—

"Tantost Abstinence contrainte
Vest d'une robe cameline,
Et s'atourne comme beguyne,
Et eut d'ung large *couvrechief*,
Et d'ung blanc drap *couvert* son *chief*."

That is, "had a large kerchief, and with a white cloth covered her head." *Kerchief* thus meaning originally a cloth to cover the head, it is well enough to call a similar cloth for the neck a neck-kerchief, and one for use in the hand a hand-kerchief; but *pocket-handkerchief* and *neck-handkerchief* are the abomination of superfluity and the effervescence of haberdashery.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOUBTFUL PHRASES, OLD AND NEW.

UNDER the convenient heading of this chapter I shall gather a very few of the brief colloquial discussions into which I have been led, either rarely by critics, or much more frequently by correspondents, since the publication of "Words and their Uses." I shall purposely leave them as nearly in their original form as seems suitable to their present place, not smoothing their controversial edge or pruning them of the repetition of arguments *pro* and *con*, to which it seems to me that they owe any interest which they may have had when they were first published, or may hope to awaken at present. For a like reason I shall in some cases give the letters of my correspondents.[1]

"HAD RATHER" AND "HAD N'T OUGHTER."

In a letter dated from one of our colleges of the best standing the writer brings up for consideration the word *had* in the phrases, "As if a hundred horses had better not have been killed" and "He had better have avoided it." To this use of *had* he objects, and he makes the following suggestion: —

"The frequent employment in conversation of the sound of the final *d* as a common contraction for *had* and *would*, in connection with *rather* and *better*, might easily cause the

[1] I nevertheless here repeat for certainly the twentieth time my earnest request that my readers and my non-readers will not call upon me to decide disputed points in language. I have never set myself up as competent for such an office, and for it I have not her leisure nor liking.

phrase *I had rather* to be substituted for *I would rather*, in conversation, through the colloquial *I'd rather*, and then it might pass into writing. The same applies to *better*. Does this afford a sufficient explanation?"

The supposition, which is not new, that *had rather* is the fruit of a misapprehended contraction common to both *had* and *would* is not well founded. Doubtless, *I'd rather* may represent *I would rather*; and when intended as a contraction of that phrase it might be misapprehended as a contraction of *I had rather*. It is true also that both phrases are used by writers of good standing. But the conclusion drawn by my correspondent, and even by some grammarians, is not warranted; for *I had rather*, *you had better*, and the like have been in common use for centuries. On the other hand, that fact proves only itself; that is, a certain frequency of use. It does not show that the phrase in question is the best for its purpose, or that it is a reasonable use of language; although the latter is always to be presumed in a phrase or a construction of long and general acceptance. It may be added, as of some interest and as conclusive against the assumption that *I'd* represents *I would*, that the *l* in *should* and *would* was pronounced until about a century and a half ago, and was so strongly insisted upon that we have to go back only about two hundred years to find the contraction of *I would* printed *I'ld*, which shows that *I'd*, which appears side by side with *I'ld*, was then a contracted form of *I had*.

The question as to the correctness of *had rather*, and the unfavorable judgment upon it which I casually expressed in "The Galaxy," were discussed in an essay in the "Educational Monthly." The tone of the writer is magisterial and severe; but it lacks

that rough flavor of personal discourtesy which some champions of *usus et prætera nihil* think becoming in them, — an assumption that I shall not dispute, — or which, perhaps, they find themselves compelled to adopt as seasoning to give some zest to the flat dullness of trite platitude. There is so much satisfaction in meeting a manly and fair opponent that I wish the arguments of the writer in the "Educational Monthly" were more pointedly directed against my position. But in fact there is very little of it that concerns me, and that little is easily disposed of; for almost all of the writer's argument and irony is put forth against those (for it seems that there are such) who regard *had* in phrases like *I had rather go* as "an auxiliary verb," and who find fault with it in those constructions because "it will not parse."[1] Now, even as to whether there really be such a thing as an auxiliary verb I very much doubt; and as to whether any English sentence would "parse" I have not once concerned myself since I came from under the ferule that tenderly guided my earliest years.[2] It may be that it would have been better for me and for my readers if I had made a grammarian of myself; but that does not affect the fact that I have not; and the only wrong done me by the author of the article in question is that he speaks of my little paragraph as "the latest instance of this kind of criticism;"

1 "The whole difficulty as to the propriety of saying 'had rather,' 'had better,' 'had as lief,' etc., arises from regarding *had* as an 'auxiliary verb,' in the common acceptation of that term. In a certain sense, no doubt, it is an auxiliary. *Dare*, in the sentence 'I dare do it,' and *is said*, in the sentence 'Hanno is said to have reached the shores of Arabia,' may be called auxiliary verbs. So *had*, when used in the forms under consideration, may be said to be an auxiliary; that is, it aids in complementing the phraseology which embodies the predicate of the sentence." (Page 62.)

2 See *Words and their Uses*, chapter ix.

meaning the auxiliary and the parsing kind. According to the view that I take of the English language, parsing is the merest superfluity, either as training for its mastery or as a means of its analytic study. The writer in the "Educational Monthly" seems to think otherwise; and he does battle with antagonists of his own faith. It must be admitted that of them he makes great slaughter. But I shall not weep over their remains. Let the dead in grammar bury their dead. It is "none of my funeral."

The only point which I brought forward for consideration (and in doing so I spoke rather as a recorder of doubts that were making themselves felt than as an opponent of one form or the advocate of another) was whether, in the phrases in question, *had* is the best word, or, if you please, a good word, the right word, to convey the intended meaning. The meaning of a word is determined in a great measure, but not absolutely and entirely, by precedent, "authority," usage. And as to "had better," "had rather," "had as lief," and so forth, it is out of question that this use of *had* has the sanction of long usage, not only by the English-speaking people generally, but by some of their greatest and most careful writers. It is therefore not at all surprising that my "Educational" opponent should say, —

> "Hence, consistently with grammatical principles, as well as with long-established, unquestioned English usage, and that too of the best and most careful writers in the language, we hesitate not to write 'had rather' and 'had better' whenever it suits our purpose."

Two points, however, in the judgment pronounced by this critic, need comment; in one case very brief,

in the other more extended. The phraseology is said to be consistent with grammatical principles. Now, as I have said before, with what are called grammatical principles in the English language I profess to have no concern whatever; and therefore whether any construction is in conformity with them or not is, *ad hoc*, a matter that I cannot rightfully be called upon to take into consideration.

The second point is the assertion that this usage is "unquestioned," — an assertion which seems to have been too thoughtlessly made. I deny it; and to the contrary produce not only a score of such letters as that cited above (although they are evidence of some weight), but the very grammarians whom the writer in the "Educational Monthly" feels called upon to withstand, together with a writer on language of the learning and acumen of Archbishop Trench, and an orator of the high repute of Wendell Phillips, both of whom this very writer in this very article brings forward for castigation because of what is a deliberate avoidance of the phraseology "had better." Manifestly, therefore, the fact is directly to the contrary of this writer's too inconsiderate and unqualified assertion. The phraseology *is* questioned. It is now called upon to pass under the revision of what I have before called the court that pronounces judgment upon language, — "a mixed commission of the common and the critical, before whom precedent and good usage have presumptive authority, on condition that they bear the test of criticism, that is, of reason." And what I have thus far done is little more than to venture the prediction that the verdict of that court will be against such uses of words as *had rather be* and *had better go*, and that therefore they will suffer gradual, although not very slow, extinction.

But let us examine the passages quoted from Archbishop Trench and Mr. Phillips. The archbishop, in his book on "Bible Revision," wrote, "It appears with variations, slight indeed, but yet which *would better* have been avoided." Mr. Phillips, in a speech reported February 21, 1866, said, "Governor Parsons said he would like a million of dollars; and the eloquent apostle said he thought Massachusetts *could* better lend it." I venture without hesitation to say that in both these instances the distinguished gentlemen were incorrect in their phraseology. The prelate should have written, "but *which yet might* better have been avoided;" the orator should have said, "he thought Massachusetts *might* better lend it." But observe that in both cases, as far as "would better" and "could better" are concerned, there is no question of grammar. As far as mere grammar and the requirements of "parsing" go, *might*, *could*, *would*, and *should* suit the construction equally. The error was, in the one case, that the writer used *would* when his meaning was *might*, and in the other that the speaker used *could* when his meaning also was *might*. It is a mere question of the meaning of words, not of syntax, or even of rhetoric.

To consider this question of the meaning of the verbs to be used with *better* and *rather* and the like words: let us first take an example quoted in the "Educational Monthly's" article from Boyd's "Leisure Hours:" "The most meddlesome of tattling old women knows when she may venture to repeat Mrs. Grundy's opinion, and when she had better not." Here it is said that "had better not" "is equivalent to ought not or should not," and that "neither *would*, nor *might*, nor even *should* will fill the place of *had*

alone," and express the meaning. I venture to say that this decision is wrong. Of course, neither "she *would* better not" nor "she *should* better not" is admissible. But is not *might* the proper correlative of *may;* and as we should say "when she may venture to speak and when she might better hold her tongue," so would it not be proper and exactly expressive to say "when she may venture to repeat Mrs. Grundy's opinion and when she might better not [repeat it]"? The use of *had* for all the different shades of meaning in *might*, *could*, *would*, and *should* seems to indicate a rude and indiscriminating manner of speech; and if these various meanings could not be expressed, a barbarous poverty of language would be indicated, or at least an inflexibility and narrowness akin to that of the Latin use of *amarem* for *I might love* and *I could love* and *I would love* and *I should love*.[1] But see again that the question is not a grammatical one; not one of syntax or even of rhetorical construction, but of the mere meaning of the word that is to be used. The error is of precisely the same sort as that in the sentence, "The book can be seen by any person at this office," which I find in a journal of the highest standing. What was intended to be expressed was neither the ability of any person to see the book, nor the visibility of the book, but permission to any person to see it. The writer meant to say, "The book *may* be seen by any person," etc.

And now as to the meaning of *had*, which is all with which I have any direct concern. Its "grammatical character," to the consideration of which the writer in the "Educational Monthly" gives so much attention, and which he discusses with discrimination,

[1] See *Words and their Uses*, page 312.

if not with correct conclusion, is nothing at all
purpose.

Have, of which *had* is the preterite form, ex
simply present possession. If it ever implies o
to express any other meaning, that is only in
of the association of ideas, or by figure of spee
the sentence, "I have a duty to perform," obl
is expressed, but it is expressed by the senten
whole; *have* expresses merely present possessi
asserts that the performance of a duty pert
belongs to, the speaker. It pertains to me to p
a duty — it belongs to me to perform this du
in the sentence, "I have to go home," obliga
expressed; but in this case, as in the other, an
others of a like construction, *have* expresses
present possession. Just so we say, merely us
possessive pronoun to express obligation, "It
to do thus or so;" that is, "You have to do t
so." And so the Latin form of "I have to
eundum est mihi. To signify that an actio
be done, the impersonal gerund is combined w
dative of possession. The subject of the obli
that is, the person that *has* to do something,
pressed by the dative; and that the dative
possessive force, even with regard to material o
of course no one moderately acquainted with
needs to be reminded. That in all such phrase
in any of its tenses, expresses simple possess
some time seems too clear to need further e
ment or illustration. And so in the sentence,
with others as you would have others deal with
(which is another of those examples brough
ward as illustrative of the notion that *have* exp
obligation rather than possession), *have* exp

merely present possession, although in combination with *would* it implies volition as to present, or rather as to indefinite, time. It can have no other meaning than that which it has in the question, "How would you have others deal with you?" which seems to be just the same that it has in the tailor's question, "How will you have your trousers made?" or in Celia's threat to Rosalind, "We must have your doublet and hose plucked over your head."

Consequently, in the sentence, "I have had this cold for more than a week," which is brought forward in this article as a critical *crux* for my discomfiture, *had*, in my judgment, can express only past possession. The sentence as a whole expresses *both* past and present possession; but *had* expresses only that which is past. "I had this cold for more than a week" would express the possession of the cold for more than a week at some time past. "I have this cold" would express possession of the cold at the time present, and we cannot add "for more than a week," because that takes in time past. And when we wish to express past possession and present possession we combine *had* with *have*, and say "I have had."

But there is one other use of *had* brought forward by the critic of the "Educational Monthly," which cannot be passed over. He cites Cowper's line addressed to his mother's portrait: —

"Oh, that those lips had language!"

and also the sentence, "I wish I had his opportunities;" to which I volunteer to add another of the same sort, "If I had him here, it were better." It is adroitly put that "Cowper of course means, 'Would

that they now had language, and could speak to me!" *Had* does not express a perfected or even a past possession, for the lips referred to never had spoken. It merely assumes a present non-possession, and helps to express the wish that the power of speech were possessed."

At the first blush it does seem that this construction (and this only of all that are produced or that have occurred to me) shows that my assertion that *had* always expresses perfected or past possession was too sweeping. But let us examine the construction. In all these sentences *had* is put in the stead of *might have, could have*: "Oh, that those lips *might have* language!" "I wish I *could have* his opportunities;" and this construction is merely the use, the idiomatic use, of (in grammar phrase) the imperfect subjunctive for the imperfect potential. So in the third sentence, "If I had him here, it were better," the same idiomatic conversion has taken place in both verbs; and the sentence in its normal form is, "If I could have him here, it would be better." This substitution is formally recognized by the grammarians as idiomatic in regard to *had* and *were*. (See Lindley Murray, Etymology, sec. 7, vol. i., p. 146, ed. 1824.) Whether it is directly traceable to the Anglo-Saxon use of *hæfed* for *had* or *might have*, and of *wære* for *were* or *would be*, I shall not undertake to say. But that the usage is not at all dependent upon a sense of obligation conveyed by this use of *had* (the explanation of the writer in the "Educational Monthly") is very clear from the fact that the same use of the preterite obtains in almost all, if not all, verbs. For example: "He could not do it if he *tried*;" that is, if he *should try*, etc. "I would

break with him if it *broke* my heart;" that is, if it *should break* my heart. "She would not listen, *charmed* he never so wisely;" that is, *should* he *charm*, etc. The idiom is exactly the same as in

". . . . had he a thousand lives,
What were ten thousand to a wrong like mine?"

Milton pushed this idiom to the extreme, writing, in the "Areopagitica," "And he who *were* pleasantly disposed could not well avoid to lik'n it," etc.; that is, he who *should be* pleasantly disposed could not, etc.

But such sentences as "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God," etc., and "I had rather be right than President," cannot be thus resolved. For "I would have rather be a door-keeper," etc., "I would have rather be right," etc., are incongruous, and at variance with reason. The incongruity of "I had rather be," etc., is that of the combination of the sign of past time with that of present time, — *had be*, — which is shown by the obvious congruity of the combination of *had* with the sign of past time, *been;* for to "I had rather been a door-keeper," etc., "I had rather been right," etc., there is no logical objection. These may properly be substituted for "I would have rather been a door-keeper," etc., "I would have rather been right," etc. The question as to which form shall be preferred is one merely of taste and usage. In these sentences the word *rather*, meaning only sooner, may confuse and mislead some readers, although it is merely a modifier of *had*, and has no formative function in the sentence. The incongruous and anomalous position of *had* in these sentences may be seen by considering the expression of exactly the same thought by the

use of *would* and the transposition of *rather*. "I would be a door-keeper in the house of my God rather than dwell in the tents of the ungodly," "I would be right rather than be President," are sense and English; but "I had be a doorkeeper, etc., rather than dwell" and "I had be right rather than be President" are nonsense.

We may now consider the following couplet from "Marmion," which is brought forward as "presenting an instance of the correct use of *had rather*:"—

> "You shall wish the fiery Dane
> Had rather been your guest again."

Upon this there is the following comment:—

"Here *had*, of course, is equivalent to *might have*. But had the poet, under the idea that *had rather* should be *would rather*, written,—

> 'You shall wish the fiery Dane
> Would rather been your guest again,'

what 'a logical and self-consistent phraseology' we should have had in '*would* rather *been*'! But we are thankful that Sir Walter's instincts were more trustworthy than some people's generalizations are."

This is very sad business. It might first be suggested that Sir Walter's instincts as to the use of language were not always trustworthy; he, although standing next to Shakespeare in imaginative genius, being one of the most incorrect among the distinguished writers of our language. And then it might also be suggested that in this instance he was quite right, and that this example *is* a correct use of *had rather*, in which *had* doubtless *is* equivalent to *might have*. And therefore, of course, we may be sure that some people cannot avoid asking whether, if Sir Walter's instincts had led him to write "*had*

rather *be* your guest again," that is, "*might have* rather *be* your guest again," those instincts would still have been more trustworthy than some people's generalizations are. Plainly, Scott in this passage was quite right. There is no better English than *had been;* and it is as logical and congruous as *had be* is illogical and incongruous.

Here, however, we seem to have unearthed the origin of the illogical form which has its type in *I had rather be.* It is the perversion of an idiom, — the mistaken, or, as we sometimes say, the slipshod use of the form expressive of past time (the imperfect tense) in combination with that expressing present time; the proper use of *had* with *been* or *spoke*, and the like, having led to a thoughtless and incorrect use of it with *be* or *speak*, and the like; and the only objection made by me to the use of *I had rather be*, that is, that *had* expresses perfect and past possession, seems to be sustained.

As a further illustration of the law of this construction, let us consider another example. A lady said, "The floor had better be bare than have that carpet; indeed, I don't know but it had best be bare, any way." This is one of the cases in which we are told by the advocate of *had rather be* that *had* expresses obligation. It may be admitted, at least for the sake of the argument, that in these cases the whole sentence does express a sort of obligation. But the point is the meaning, not of the sentence, but of *had.* If *had* expresses obligation with the comparative and the superlative, it should express the same with the positive; and we should say, "The floor had well be bare," which we do not say, nor even, "The floor had as well be bare." But we may

and do say, "The floor might well, or might better, or might best, be bare." So we may consistently and logically say, "The floor had [or might have] best *been* bare, or had [or might have] better *been* bare, or had [or might have] as well *been* bare." Thus, again, we find that *had* does not express a wish or willingness or an obligation, but merely past possession; and that even in its idiomatic substitution for *could*, *would*, or *might have*, like that of *were* for *could*, *would*, or *might be*, its "preterite" or past signification must not be lost sight of.

It is not surprising to find that the advocates of *had rather* place themselves in a position which involves the defense of that peculiar locution which is most frequently heard in the form *had n't ought*. For example, in the article under consideration, this sentence is cited with approval by way of illustration: "A lesson which requires so much time to learn had need be early begun with." This, we are told, is from a book called "The Government of the Tongue;" but it need hardly be said to any reader who will consider the sentence for a moment, that the tongue concerning whose government the author writes is not the English tongue. An intelligible sentence less worthy of imitation could hardly be produced. The verbs in it and the preposition are in a very unhappy state of bereavement. It is difficult to see what is the object of either "requires" or "learn," or what function "with" performs in the expression of the author's thought. However forlorn of grammar, no one who is not bereft of commonsense can avoid seeing that the correct form of the sentence (assuming that the writer's words are to be used) would be: "A lesson which it requires so much

time to learn [or which requires so much time to learn it] has need to be early begun [or to be begun early]." We can *put up with* bad conduct or *bear with* a wayward friend, and in going through a course of study we can *begin with* a certain lesson. But after we have said that a certain lesson has need to be early begun, it is difficult to discover any other consequence than confusion from the addition of *with* to *begun*, — as difficult as to discover what is the function of *got* in the sentence, "I have got a dollar in my pocket," or what that assertion means more than "I have a dollar in my pocket."

To return to the particular point in question: in the phrase "had need to be early begun with," *need* means merely ought. For example, we may say, with the same meaning, that such a lesson needs to be begun early, or that it ought to be begun early. But those who most affect the use of *had* in such constructions would say that it "had ought to be begun early," unless, indeed, they were of the opinion that it did not need such early attention, when they would probably say that it "had n't oughter." Indeed, this very critic tells us that "*need* here is an adverb corresponding to *better* in the foregoing examples," that is, "had better," etc. This being the case, if we may turn the verb *need* into an adverb, and say "had need," we may surely do the same with the verb *ought*, and say "had ought" or "had n't ought." Those who do so will doubtless be grateful for this grammatical defense of the locution which they so much affect. It may be questioned, however, whether there is any more reasonable ground of defense of *had n't ought to be* than there is of *had rather be* and *had better be*, of which it is the worthy, if not the legitimate, offspring.

In regard to the point of usage, which is so much insisted upon and of which so much is made, it is proper to add that "I had better," etc., has not only been questioned by men like Archbishop Trench and Mr. Wendell Phillips, but doubted and shunned by the Elizabethan writers, who generally avoided what their fine intuitions of speech taught them was not a clear and forcible expression, and used instead of it "I *were*," "you *were*," etc. The dramatists are full of examples like the following: —

" . . . . If it be so, as 'tis,
Poor lady, she *were better* love a dream."
(Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, ii. 2.)

"I would kiss before I spoke.
Nay, you *were better* speak first, and when," etc
(As You Like It, iv. 1.)

"And we *were better* parch in Afric sun
Than in the pride and salt scorn of his eyes"
(Troilus and Cressida, i. 3.)

"Give them their weapons — Sirs, *you 're* best be gone"
(Middleton, Honest Whore, iv. 2.)

"Why, *you 're* best go see."
(The same, v. 1.)

"I will not say
"Your mother play'd false.
No, sir, you *were* not best."
(The Widow, i. 2.)

'Look to yourself, housewife! answer me in strong lines, you were best'
(Ford, The Lover's Melancholy, iv. 1.)

"You *were best* assault me, too!
You *were best* call him a bastard, too."
(Shirley, Gentleman of Venice, v. 1.)

"I *were best* deliver up my cold iron here."
(Honoria and Mammon, i. 1.)

My memorandums of such passages are numberless; and I believe that on the other hand "I had" is comparatively rare with the Elizabethan writers — a fact certainly of much significance.

EMPLOYEE.

NEW YORK, *March* 25, 1873.

SIR,— During the publication of "Words and their Uses" in "The Galaxy" I looked for something about the French word *employee*, which has come so much in vogue here of later years. I hoped to find an opinion upon it, if not in the chapter upon "Words that are not Words," at least in that upon "Misused Words;" but in vain. Will you have the kindness to give me your judgment as to the propriety and need of the new usage, and much oblige,

F. A. H.

This correspondent tempts me to the expression of personal preference, to which I fear that I have already manifested too strong an inclination, even in discussions of language which were avowed to be chiefly on the grounds of taste, judgment, and reason. I confess at the outset that I am prejudiced by a strong feeling against this word. The introduction of *employee* is the sign and fruit of a foolish and "snobbish" dislike to the word *servant;* a simple and honest word, which, with all that it implies, I like. Peter avows himself the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ; a British officer is proud to say that he serves her Majesty; companies of actors, of whom William Shakespeare and John Philip Kemble were members, were his Majesty's servants. The servants of a household seem to me to hold a place in it which is perfectly respectable, and which only their own conduct can degrade; I myself was for many years a servant of the United States, and I hope that no one will ever call me an *employee*. I cannot see why those who serve a railway company, or a hospital, or any corporate body, mercantile firm, or indi

[illegible] should not be called its or his servants. But it is to be said that employee has a claim to a place among a [illegible] family of words: *nominee*, one who is nominated; *payee*, one who is paid; *mortgagee*, *grantee*, *trustee*, *retiree*, *patentee*, *devotee*, etc.; and so employee, one who is employed. Then let those who prefer and who use it, recognize it boldly as an English word, which they may do with perfect propriety, and call their servants or themselves (if, being servants, they do not wish to be so called) *employees*, and not vex their souls and their vocal organs, together with the ears of their hearers, by writing *employees*, and talking of *employ-yays*.

YOU WAS.

COURT STREET, BOSTON, *March* 28, 1873.

DEAR SIR, — The expression "if I was you," or "if you [singular] was," etc., is very much in vogue among the more cultivated of our people. Is there any authority, or at least authority of any weight, to support the use of the singular form of the verb in such cases? Pardon me for obtruding such a question upon you [etc., etc.].

Very truly, G. L. H.

The two cases presented here are not at all alike. In the first, "if I was you," the verb "was" belongs to "I;" there can therefore be no objection to the "singular form." The only question as to this case is whether it should not be "if I *were* you;" to which the answer is that even among educated people and careful writers and speakers the "subjunctive" form is passing out of favor and out of use. In this case, however, I should personally much prefer "if I were you." In the second case the verb belongs to "you," which has long been the pronoun of the second

person singular, as much so as *I* is the pronoun of the first; and the apparent incongruity here is in the use of the pronoun of the second person with the verb of the first and third, "if you was" instead of "if thou wast or wert."

One of the most remarkable phenomenons in the history of language is the substitution, centuries ago, in the western tongues, of the pronoun of the second person plural for that of the second person singular, which has obtained in English, more or less, for five hundred years. This appears to have been caused by the operation of an inexplicable sense of discourtesy in the use of *thou*, or rather in the use of the second person at all. In the generation before the last it was customary in families of the strictest and most thorough breeding for the children never to address their parents as "you," but to say, for instance, "Does father think thus?" "Will mother do so?" The awful mystery of the etiquette of *su* and *usted* is one of the first difficulties the learner of Spanish has to encounter. And one cannot open the first pages of Shakespeare without encountering this problem. In the long dialogue in the second scene of the "Tempest," Miranda always uses *you* in speaking to her father; he always *thou* in speaking to her. Ariel, as a supernatural being, addresses Prospero as *thou*. When Ferdinand enters, Prospero immediately, and always when speaking harshly, *thous* him; but in one speech, in which he addresses him kindly, and with a recognition of the young man's rank, he uses *you*. The use of *thou* plainly implied an assertion of superiority.

When the change from *thou* to *you* in ordinary conversation was made, and in place of *thou wast*

came *you were*, the plural pronoun took with it the plural form of the verb; which seems, moreover, to have been welcomed for its own sake, because it rid us of *wast* and *wert*. For in cases in which *thou* was permissible, and indeed was on the lips of a speaker or the pen of a writer, we find in the same sentence a change to *you*, which seems plainly for the mere purpose of ease from the formal and ponderous *thou wast* and *thou wert*. And now the very frequent use of *you was* among people of education has the air of a movement toward making *was*, throughout that tense, the singular form of the verb, as *were* is the plural. The old second person singular is gone forever, although its lifeless form is embalmed in the Hebraism of prayer, and in poetry, which always affects archaism. It is dangerous to assert a general negative; but I should hardly hesitate to say that there cannot be produced an instance of its use in prose within one hundred and fifty years, that is, for five generations, except with the obvious consciousness of the reproduction of an archaic form. "Thou lovest" is as dead as "thou hast holpen," that is, "you have helped."

As to the question between *you was* and *you were* (singular) used indicatively, it seems to me hardly debatable; for the purpose of using *you* is not attained if the plural form of the verb does not accompany the pronoun. But *you was* has the support of eminent example; that, for instance, of so careful and finished a writer as Sterne, who uses it frequently. Nor is it uncommon with other English writers of equal grade.

A BUNDLE OF QUERIES.

207 East 82d Street, New York, *September* 29, 1873.

Dear Sir, — You are doing a good work, etc., etc., etc. [My correspondents will pardon my omission of their kind and encouraging remarks, and also the suppression of the names of the authors of some of the examples of bad English sent for correction.] I would ask you, Can nothing be done to get rid of that barbarism of speech which has lately come into vogue, introduced by our American journalists, of placing the adverb between the sign of the infinitive mood and the verb? — as, "She is learning to elegantly dance," instead of to dance elegantly; "I hope to soon recover my health;" "I propose to to-morrow return home;" "For the benefit of my health I have resolved to four miles walk every day;" "I am unable to fully understand you." This collocation is grossly unclassical, not being found in any standard author of any age. I can see nothing gained by it but the gratification of disgusting pedantic pride, or a malicious pleasure in torturing cultivated ears.

Will you tell me whether to say *on* or *between* the horns of a dilemma, and why? Also the origin of the Latin phrase, *cum grano salis*?

Many good American writers confound *at fault* and *in fault*. I noticed the other day that —— —— does. *At fault* is a huntsman's phrase. The hounds are said to be *at fault* when they have lost scent of the game, and are running hither and thither to find it. *In fault* signifies in error; *at fault*, in perplexity.

Permit me also to ask how long we are to use daily a class of foreign words before incorporating them and anglicizing the pronunciation? Take the French word *début*, for instance; not one American in five hundred can pronounce it correctly. The *u* he sounds like *oo*.

The French, when they adopt a foreign word, gallicize it at once; they make the pronunciation bend to their own

laws. The Spaniards say *Gil Blas;* but final *s* is silent in French; the French therefore say *Gil Bla* (*a* broad). The French language stands on its dignity; our vernacular has no dignity to stand on, so it crouches. Is it always to be a parasite? Why don't we say *debutt?* Because, if we did, we should laugh at one another. We don't laugh when we say *deboo*, for the sufficient reason that we don't know that we are speaking bad French.

Yours respectfully, D. R. T.

The foregoing letter is a specimen, although its good sense and good taste prevent its being a fair specimen, of the many received by the writer of these chapters; not one in a hundred of his correspondents being a person with whom he has any acquaintance, even by way of previous correspondence.

D. R. T. gives information as well as asks it. He is so clearly right about the placing of the adverb as to make comment unnecessary. The examples which he gives are in themselves a condemnation of the fashion which he regards with such disfavor. Distinguished precedent might be shown for this construction, as for many other bad uses of language; but it is eminently un-English.[1]

As to a *dilemma*, the proper word of relation is *between;* because a dilemma — δίλημμα, meaning two inclosing positions — presents to a disputant two unpleasant alternatives, called horns, of which he is obliged to accept one. When the dilemma is presented he is upon neither horn; and he never is upon both.

Cum grano salis has its point from a sort of pun

[1] As the proof of this page is passing through my hands, I receive a letter in which the writer says, "As I have been unable to satisfactorily inform myself," etc. If he had written "to inform myself satisfactorily" his English would have been better.

which is lost in the translation, — "with a grain of salt." *Sal* has for its secondary meaning wit, mental acumen, intellectual good taste and judgment; and so, to take a thing *cum grano salis* is to use caution and discrimination in giving it credence or consideration.

As regards foreign words adopted by us, whether French, Latin, Greek, or what not, their complete naturalization is of course to be effected only by time, and by frequent and general usage; and the question as to when this has been accomplished is also of course to be determined only by observation. The usage with regard to the plural is a good guide. For example, *index* is an unmodified Latin word, of which the plural is *indices*, which was formerly used. But no one would now say *indices*, except when using the word in a scientific way. Of *memorandum*, the Latin plural *memoranda* is used by some, the English *memorandums* by others, showing, as matter of history, a yet imperfect naturalization of the word; and *criterion* has generally *criteria* as its plural; for which I can see no sufficient reason. It would seem to be a sensible and, to use my correspondent's expression, a dignified way to naturalize such words completely as soon as possible. Nevertheless, he would be a bold man who should speak of an actress's *debutt*, and of her *debutting*. It may be doubted, however, whether, if he could not say *début* (*daybue*), he might not better say *debutt* than *deboo*.

UP AND DOWN, ABOVE AND BELOW.

The question is asked whether it is right to say that a thing is up stairs or that it is above stairs, that it is down stairs or that it is below stairs. The

meaning of the words and the best usage require the latter form in both cases. We *go* up stairs to get something that *is* above stairs, and down stairs to get something that *is* below stairs. We go up a hill and down a hill; but a house is upon a hill or below a hill. And yet, although we go up town or down town, a friend may live up town or down town. But in the latter cases it will be observed that *up* and *down* do not express a relation as to position in the town, but to ourselves or to some other object. It is difficult to express the difference in the shade of meaning, which is yet very distinct; for although *above* and *below* always imply fixed position, *up* and *down* do not always imply motion; as in the nursery rhyme about the star, —

> "Up above the world so high,
> Like a diamond in the sky,"

and in "down below the middle earth." These four words are called adverbs by the grammarians and lexicographers, but also prepositions; a variable classification, which shows the difficulty and uncertainty of such a system of nomenclature. As to usage, the best is exemplified in the title of the old comedy, "High Life *below* Stairs," and in this sentence from Fielding: "Those orders I gave in no very low voice, so that those *above* stairs might possibly conceive," etc. Failure to perceive the distinction in meaning, or an indifference to it, is, however, bringing "up stairs" and "down stairs" as expressive of position into very general use.

"DIFFER WITH" AND "DIFFER FROM."

My attention has been called to a discussion as to the comparative propriety of these two phrases, in

which the question was finally submitted to Chancellor A. R. Benton, who, in a published letter upon the subject, decides that both are proper; "differ from" when mere divergence is intended to be expressed, "differ with" when mere negation or disagreement. The question is something like that in regard to "different from" and "different to," and turns, of course, as Chancellor Benton remarks, upon the meaning of the particle *dis*, from which the s has fallen away, and which, as it denotes separation, requires *from* after it.[1] There can be no doubt as to the examples, "Agassiz differed from Darwin upon the theory of development," "One star differeth from another star in glory." The question is not as to "differ from," but as to "differ with," and whether it is admissible, and if so, when and on what grounds. There seems to be no doubt that it is admissible, but not as an alternative with "differ *from*." It has quite a different meaning; more, I venture to think, than Chancellor Benton's mere negation or disagreement. To say that one star differs *with* another star in glory would be inadmissible, not English. "Differ from" is used to express mere unlikeness, divergence, in things both animate and inanimate; "differ with" to express the action of intelligent beings, — the *expression* of a difference; *with* implying the presence, or the constructive presence, of two differing or disagreeing parties. A man may differ from another man in opinion, without differing with him. For one may never have heard of the other's opinion, from which he

[1] The chancellor says that he had hoped to find in *Words and their Uses* a discussion of this word, but that he had failed to do so. I hope that no one expects to find in that book a discussion of all the bad or uncertain phrases which are spoken as English. The book contains only four hundred and fifty pages.

yet differs; or, hearing it, he may hold his peace about his own difference. But if he disputes the other's opinion, particularly if he does so in his presence, he differs with him. Thus Hazlitt, describing a commonplace critic, says: "He is a person who thinks by proxy, and talks by rote. He differs *with* you, not because he thinks you in the wrong, but because he thinks somebody else will think so." And so we say that a man had a difference with another, meaning a dispute with him. For example: "This part of the matter is chiefly worth notice because it illustrates the blind precipitation with which Mr. Gladstone swallows and repeats any accusation against those who have the good or bad fortune to differ *with* him politically." (*Saturday Review*, February 21, 1880.) We should never think of saying that he had a difference from him; nor should we say that he had a difference with him, unless his difference of opinion or of feeling received expression. Therefore, "I beg leave to differ from you" is correct, and "I beg leave to differ with you" incorrect. For what is intended in this is a courteous expression of mere difference of opinion. And yet, in speaking of what took place on such an occasion, it would be correct to say that the one instantly differed with the other. We should not say that he instantly differed from him; for his difference from the opinion of the man with whom he then differed might have been of ten years' standing.

A CIVIL SERVICE QUESTION. — POSSESSIVES OF COMPOUNDS.

The Board of Civil Service Examiners at Washington gave, as a test of the knowledge of the use of the apostrophe as a sign of the possessive case, the

following sentence: "The Commissioner of Customs decisions are correct," requiring the apostrophe to be placed after "customs." A dispute having arisen upon the point, and it being contended that the proper form was "The Commissioner's (of Customs) decisions are correct," an officer of the Treasury Department submitted the question to me for an opinion.

The point here to be considered is, What is it that is to be placed in the possessive? Who is it whose decisions are correct? The commissioner, of course. But is the word *commissioner* the complete designation of the subject of the sentence? If we are to regard the words "of customs" as a merely parenthetical explanation of the sort of commissioner spoken of, then the apostrophe, which is the sign of the possessive case, should follow the word *commissioner*. But it seems plain that, according to general acceptance, that is not the case; and that "Commissioner of Customs" is a kind of compound substantive, as if it were written Commissioner-of-Customs. The officers thus designated are not spoken of merely as commissioners, except in the customs service. That designation would be altogether too vague. Each one of them, in general speech, is called not merely a commissioner, but a Commissioner of the Customs; and therefore the strict grammatical accuracy insisted upon and long-continued usage seem to be perfectly consistent; and consequently the decision of the Civil Service Board is correct. We say the Secretary of the Treasury's report, and not the Secretary's of the Treasury report; although we say in the plural the Secretaries of the Treasury, and not the Secretary of the Treasuries, and although, when it was understood that affairs of the Treasury were spoken of, an

officer of the Treasury, and the public generally, would say simply the Secretary's report. The free structure of our language enables us to make such distinctions. In Latin, for example, all the words employed in the expression of such a compound idea would be in the genitive case; and even when the words are actually compounded into one they are still all declined, as every boy knows who has got well on in his accidence. For example, *respublica*, a commonwealth, *reipublicæ*, of a commonwealth, *jusjurandum*, an oath, *jurisjurandi*, of an oath; and in Anglo-Saxon even *himself* is thus declined: nom., *hewylf*, gen., *hissylfes*, etc. But in English it seems to be yet not settled by usage whether we are to say *somebody's else* or *somebody else's*. So long as these words are regarded as two and written as two, the better usage would seem to be *somebody's else*. For *else* means merely other, a person other than one previously spoken of or implied; and we should say somebody's other than he, and not somebody other's than he. But if we regard the two ideas as compounded into one, and write *somebody-else*, it is proper to write *somebody-else's*; for which there is the authority of usage by eminent writers, and to which general usage seems to be tending. Careful writers and speakers, however, are still particular to use the possessive of the uncompounded form.

VERBS CORRESPONDING TO NOUNS IN "ION."

The following letter, from an officer of rank and distinction in the navy, brings up a point upon which word-makers who have given little attention to the structure of language and the etymology of the Romanic part of our mixed speech should be very cautious: —

July 30, 1874.

DEAR SIR, — In "Words and their Uses" it is stated — the precise page has escaped me — that under certain conditions the coining of a word is justifiable. I am unwilling to quote that work as authority, however, without your consent, in the particular case to which I am about to refer, which must be my apology for addressing you.

In writing of the operations of fleets it is very frequently necessary to refer to their movements in two different ways. 1st. Movements to gain certain advantages over the enemy. Under the old sailing tactics, for example, it was usual to say that "a squadron *manœuvred* for the weather-gage," or "a squadron so *manœuvred* as to cut off the enemy's rear," etc. But when we wish to speak of a tactical movement of the fleet, the word *manœuvre* will not answer; we must then use *evolution*. For example: "The fleet had been so thoroughly exercised that it was able to perform all the ordinary evolutions of a fleet with readiness and precision at night as well as by day."

In the one case we say, "The admiral *manœuvred* the fleet with great skill," etc. In the other, "The admiral performed the various evolutions like a skillful tactician."

But *to perform evolutions* seems to be a clumsy expression, and *to evolute* expresses the action clearly and simply. What objection, I ask, is there to my coining that word to use in a strictly technical sense?

With all due deference to Webster, his definition of the word *manœuvre* is not technically correct; and from the derivation of the word *evolution* it seems to me that the verb *to evolute* would be perfectly proper. I should not like to have such a word printed over my name, however, if it cannot stand fire. May I *evolute* a fleet? Begging you will pardon the liberty I take in addressing you,

I am your very obedient servant, S. D. L.

I am very glad that this gallant officer did not "evolute" his fleet. The proposed word is, I need

hardly say, altogether inadmissible. And yet, as we have *contortion* and *contort*, *suggestion* and *suggest*, *digestion* and *digest*, *contribution* and *contribute*, *persecution* and *persecute*, *execution* and *execute*, and the like, it may seem strange to many persons that, as we have *evolution*, we cannot have *evolute*. The reason lies in the mixed character of our language, which compels us to conform the etymology of many of our systems of words to that of other tongues (in this case to that of the Latin), a conformity which nevertheless may be carried to excess. Our words *revolution*, *convolution*, *involution*, and *evolution* are all derived from the Latin, and are based upon the Latin verb *volvere*, to turn over, to unroll. To this stem the particles *re*, *con*, *in*, and *e* are prefixed, making the verbs *revolvere*, *convolvere*, *involvere*, and *evolvere*. The nouns in question are formed upon a part of these verbs called the supine, ending in *tum*; as, *revolutum*, and so forth. For the correctness of their formation we have the example of the classical *revolutio*, but *revolutio* is Low Latin. The verbs corresponding to these nouns are therefore formed upon the Latin verbs corresponding to their supines; and the verb of *revolution* is *revolve*, of *evolution evolve*, of *involution involve*, and so forth. There is a classical Latin verb *voluto*, meaning to roll, but that was not used in compounds. To speak of evoluting a fleet would therefore be like speaking of revoluting a government, or involuting a man in a troublesome affair. But when we speak of the overturning of a government we do not say that it is revolved. We take the word *revolution*, which has come to have a special sense in that regard, and adding to it the suffix *ize* we say that the government is revolution-

ed. In like manner, if *manœuvre* will not express e tactical movements of a fleet for which *evolution* s acquired a specific sense, it is probable that naval eticians will use the word *evolutionize*, which, alough not a lovely word, is quite analogical.

It is probable that this querist was led into his surse by what is said in "Words and their Uses" out the use of *juxtapose*, — that it is correct, that ord being involved in *juxtaposition*. But our word *sition* and its compounds, although they originate the Latin verb *ponere*, to place, come to us directly om the French; our words and the French being in ct the very same, letter for letter. We therefore o not go to the Latin verb *ponere* for the correonding verbs to those nouns. We do not say *imone*, *depone*, *expone*, and so forth; but we use the mpounds of the French verb *poser*, and say *impose*, *pose*, *expose*, and so forth, using even *pose* in the nse of to place formally. Therefore, also, using *juxposition*, we may use *juxtapose*.

"ENGLISH DEFILED."

Among the criticisms of the Department reports hich accompanied the President's Message at the pening of the session of Congress, 1874, was one of a trictly verbal character. Such criticisms are rare, — arer than they should be; for our public documents, ncluding our acts of Congress and our state laws, ave for some years past been so carelessly worded nd so confused in their construction that it can ardly be but that, in years to come, misunderstandng and doubt will arise as to the meaning of many f them, and consequently serious trouble. This inxcusable slovenliness, and the contrast presented

thereto by the care and precision as to style in the making of the Constitution of the United States I have previously remarked upon.[1] That instrument and the laws passed by Congress in the earliest years of the federal republic are models of simplicity and clearness of expression, which it would be well for the official persons and the legislators of our day to study and to follow. Very rarely does it happen that there is any doubt as to the construction or the real meaning of a passage in any one of those laws, other than such as must arise when the necessarily imperfect instrument of human expression, language, is used by more than one person at more than one time.

For with all our efforts toward its perfection, the meaning of language cannot be made absolutely and permanently precise and certain. It can hardly be trusted as it is used between man and man for the moment; and indeed it may be doubted whether in all speech, which is the only real language, the speaker (that is, his character, tone of mind, views of life, and immediate feeling and purpose) is not such an essential element of meaning that what is once spoken can never be again exactly repeated. The word perishes in its utterance, dies in its birth, and can never again be restored to its full life, except under exactly the same circumstances, — the speaker the same, the hearer the same, their surroundings and state of mind the same, as they were when it was spoken; a recurrence which can never happen. But as practically words must be regarded as having a fixable and generally accepted, if not a lasting and universally understood, meaning, this element of

[1] *Words and their Uses*, pages 36–39.

change and uncertainty in language is only a reason for the greater care and precision in its use on all occasions of general and enduring importance.

To return to the Secretary of the Navy and the sins against English with which he was charged. Hardly had his report been published, when one of our daily newspapers, which has long held a high position as an authority in literature no less than in politics and on social questions, — a paper with which are connected the names of Bryant and Parke Godwin and John Bigelow, — the "Evening Post," fell upon the hapless Secretary in an editorial article headed "English Defiled," in which he was sorely chastened for using two words, *eventuality* and *canalised*. These the critic placed without hesitation in the class of words that are not words. The Secretary wrote that the coming transit of Venus seemed to him an occurrence of such scientific importance that he had determined to put a government ship at the service of a party of observers, "under any eventuality now considered." This use of *eventuality* was thus censured: —

> "What he means to say is that he will do this under any circumstances, or contingency, or event. 'Eventuality' is a very poor word at the best, and of doubtful birth. It has a place in the best dictionaries, it is true, but its origin is laid to the score of what is called phrenology, and appears to have been due to the desire of some 'professor' to get a new name for an old bump. In that technical sense it means a 'propensity to take cognizance of facts or events.' Its misuse, into which Secretary Robeson has fallen, is common among a class of newspaper reporters, and those persons who prefer sound to sense."

The exception, in certain respects, seems to be well

upon it, must mean "*the* coming or happening as a consequence." The technical phrenological use of the word is purely arbitrary, and if not cant at least cantish. Its real etymological meaning, that which logically comes from the combination of its base, *event*, with the suffixes *al* and *ity*, is that which is given by Stormonth, "the coming or happening as a consequence," — just the sense in which it was used by Secretary Robeson.

Nevertheless, it is a word which the Secretary might better not have used, and which every man who would write good English may well eschew. For after all our double suffixing we get only a pretentious word of five syllables, which means no more than *event* itself. Our journey brings us back just whence we started. *Event* is "that which happens or comes to pass, the conclusion, the consequence of anything;" the difference between which and the definition given above of *eventuality* is not quite equal to that between tweedledum and tweedledee.[1] And the same reasoning applies to *eventuate*, which means to come out as a result — a meaning for the expression of which it is not at all necessary to use such a word. For the English way of expressing that meaning is to use the word *event* as a verb, as it has heretofore been used. We have made the word *event* from the Latin; and it is our English way to use words both as nouns and as verbs. Should we abandon that usage

[1] So Edward Freeman, distinguished hardly less as a philologist than as a historian: —

"We have heard in modern times of 'oppressed nationalities,' — a form of words which, I suppose, means much the same as oppressed nations." (Comparative Politics, page 84.)

These *alities* are often poor stuff; and some of the *ousties* are not much better.

our language would lose not only one of its strik-ing features, but one great element of its strength. It is the free use of words, without regard to the grammatical distinctions of verb, noun, adjective, and adverb, but with a clear apprehension of their co-herent meaning, that gives to Elizabethan English that force and pungency and picturesqueness which, with all the later refinements and enrichments of our tongue, even our best writers find it difficult, nay, quite impossible, to attain. We of to-day are more exact, more precise; but we are comparatively tame and weak. As to *eventuate* and *eventuality*, and their inevitable consequences, *eventualize* and *eventualization*, which, yet unknown, I believe, have equal claims with the others to recognition, we can do better without them all than with any one of them. The use of *event* as a verb — for example, "Such a course of conduct would event unhappily" — is thoroughly in accordance with English analogy and precedent.

The other occasion of censure by the same critic is in the following sentence: "The westerly trend of the coast made the area that would have to be canalized broader in extent." As to this it is said: "We hope the Secretary knows that there is no such word as *canalize* in the English language. He might as well speak of the removal of the rocks at Hell Gate as channelizing the harbor of New York." The formation of the two words is certainly just alike, and so is their propriety. And it so happens that they are in fact the same word, *canal* and *channel* being merely different ways of spelling one word, as any one will see by pronouncing the *ch* of the latter word hard; and *kennel*, a gutter or water course in a street is also the same word, merely spelled in another way

But the fact, however, that there is yet no such word in English as *canalize* is not a valid objection to its use. That sort of conservatism will never do in language. If we need new words, we must have them; and we will. This I have again and again impressed upon the readers of my word-colloquies, which are written from no conservative or purist point of view.[1]

The real objection to *canalize* is twofold: that it is both needless and un-English. Here again it is Engglish to use the same word as a noun and as a verb, and to write "made broader the area that would have to be canaled," etc. The sentence thus written would have been understood at a glance by every English-speaking man who could read, and would have attracted no attention because of the words that entered into its structure; which, in sober business prose at least, is one of the most desirable of all qualities in a sentence. *Canal* and *channel* are both nouns, but with the use of the latter as a verb, *to channel*, and in the participial forms *channeling* and *channeled*, we are all well acquainted; and the former word should be used in the same manner. Indeed, this observation should not be necessary, and would not here be made, were it not for the tendency (of which the misuse in question is a sign) to set aside the simple and the English mode of word formation in favor of one which would give us in this case, for example, the following sequence: *canal*, noun; *to canalize*, verb; *canalist*, noun, one who makes or "runs" canals; *canalization*, noun, the making of canals; *canalal*, adjective, having reference to canals; and last not least (on the system which gives us *experimen-*

[1] *Words and their Uses*, page 406, and *passim*.

talize instead of *experiment*, as a verb), *canalalize*, to make canals, and *canalalist*, one who makes canals, not by simply making them as best he can, but in the high and mighty style, according to a "complex of canons." The word *canal*, used as a verb or noun, with perhaps the addition of *canaler* or *canalist*, would answer all the needs of any English-speaking man who does not affect the grand style, and desire finer bread than is made of wheat.

These almost trite remarks will be justified if they help to direct the attention of the general reader and the average writer to the characteristic English use of the same word as noun and verb, and the needlessness in most cases of adding the suffix *ize* to our nouns for the sake of verbal form or expression. In many cases necessity or convenience requires it, and then it must and will be used. But when not so required, it may much better be omitted from a language already overloaded with words that hiss at themselves as they are uttered.

EPIDEMIC AND ENDEMIC: A QUESTION IN MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY.

KNOXVILLE, EAST TENNESSEE,
May 23, 1874.

DEAR SIR, — I do not wish my name, at least for the present, to be made public in connection with any attention courteously given by you to the subject of this note.

I am anxious for the medical as well as the general readers of your articles to have your opinion of the employment of a word which is in common use, but which, not always having the same force, is consequently a source of error in doctrine.

I do not particularly care for its original or derivative

force, but I desire its meaning as a scientific term or as a professional technicality to be conventionally fixed, — to be destitute of any capacity to fill more than a single purpose; as terms in science and technicalities in professions ought always invariably to carry the same force and meaning. The word is *epidemic*. I know that in its popular sense it conveys the idea of wide-spread; but I think that it is never properly used by a medicıner except in a sense antithetical with the word *endemic*. In my fallible judgment both words have the same derivative force, and hence it is useless to retain them both in professional language, unless each has attached to it by agreement a specific, determined meaning. It is true that the dictionary consulted by medical men in this country — Dunglisou's — and the great dictionary by Webster sustain the view I have expressed; but there is hardly a medical journal published in the English language on the pages of which the word *epidemic* can be found and restricted to the definition as expressed in Dunglisou's and in Webster's dictionaries. Bell's "Encyclopædia,' that probably will now be extensively appealed to as authoritative, gives a view very different from Dunglison and Webster. I trust that your silence will not cause me to feel that I have presumed.

Very respectfully, etc., DR. F. A. R.

Of the great desirability of a fixed exactness in the meaning attached to scientific or technical terms there can be no doubt. Indeed, vagueness of meaning is the defect most to be avoided in all language; and it is chief among the few defects of our own mixed speech. It is more difficult for a writer to express himself in English with an exactness which shuts off misapprehension and perversion, than it is for him to do so in German, French, Italian, Spanish, or Latin. I know of at least one profound scholar who has given up all reading of English books on

philosophy and the like subjects, because of the vague and shifting way in which English writers use language, and of another person, a writer of distinction, who declines oral discussion altogether, because he says it is impossible to understand just what people mean. My humble endeavors in language have been made chiefly in the hope of promoting in some measure a greater exactness in speech, which they may do at least by directing attention to the inexactness which prevails.

As to the sense of the medical term brought up by our physician, I have only to say that it is of the utmost importance that such a word should have a precise meaning. But although my special medical studies were discontinued many years ago, they were, I think, carried far enough, and have brought me enough into contact with the profession, to justify me in expressing a doubt as to the assumed uncertainty of meaning with which *epidemic* is used by physicians. According to my observation, it is not used by them as antithetical to *endemic*, but rather as discriminative from it.

Etymologically both words have nearly the same meaning; their only difference being that of the two Greek prepositions *epi* and *en*, of which the former means *upon* and the latter *in*, or *among*. *Epidemic* means, therefore, upon the people (*demos*), *endemic*, in or among the people. The former, according to established usage among the best physicians, means strictly a disease which breaks out and diffuses itself widely over a community, and which sooner or later abates and disappears, possibly never to return. The latter, according to the same usage, means a disease which prevails in and pertains to a particular neigh-

borhood; a disease not brought there, but belonging there, and which, although it may prevail more at one time than at another, is likely to be found in that neighborhood at any time, except perhaps under certain forbidding conditions, as, for example, black frost. Thus yellow fever is endemic in Havana; it was in former years epidemic in New York. Fever and ague is endemic in many places; strictly speaking, it is never epidemic anywhere. Small-pox and scarlet fever are apt to become epidemic wherever they appear; they are not endemic in any place, or among any people; but it seems as if diphtheria were about to become endemic in certain neighborhoods in the city of New York. Goitre is endemic in Switzerland, and elephantiasis in the East. Cholera is an epidemic which, starting from India, diffuses itself among all peoples and throughout all countries; while puerperal peritonitis may become a local epidemic circumscribed by the walls of a lying-in hospital.

In these senses, I believe, these words are strictly used by all competent and careful medical writers and speakers. When there appears to be uncertainty or confusion in their use by such persons, it will be found, I am quite sure, to apply rather to the facts than to the phraseology. One physician or medical writer may regard that as epidemic which another believes to be endemic; but the character and habits of a malady being once clearly discriminated and firmly settled, there is, according to my observation, no question as to the class under which it should be ranged.

SCIENTIST, AND OTHER ISTS.

The word scientist has been brought to my attention by more than one correspondent. It has attained a certain degree of usage among those who it would seem are dissatisfied with "scientific man" and "man of science," and who doubtless, with like distaste to "literary man" and "man of letters," will soon contrive some dreadful compound in *ist* to use in their stead. *Scientist* appears to me, as it does to many others, intolerable, as being both unlovely in itself and improper in its formation. "Sample-room" language gives us *drinkist*, *shootist*, *walkist*, and the like with an undisguised incongruity, which has a ridiculous effect, partly at least intentional, if not wholly so. Those words are regarded as the creations of exquisite humor by the persons who use them; nay, their very use is looked upon as an indication of latent powers which would place the user, if he would but let himself out, foremost in the ranks of the noble army of "American humorists."

We say normally *naturalist*, *geologist*, *organist*, etc., and may properly use as many more words formed in like manner as we choose to coin. But I can find no lawful instance corresponding to *scientist*, which might well go with *drinkist* and *shootist*. If we would, we could say *sciencist;* and let who will say it, and hiss himself properly in the saying of it. But we cannot break up the sibilation with a *t;* for even the noun *scientia* will yield us only *ti*, which in sound is *sh*, and *sciential* (noun) and *scientialist* must be left to the lovers of words like *agential* ("an agential"); and if we assume the obsolete *scient* as its base, the meaning of our new word will be "knowingist."

In former times the suffix *er* seems to have been the principal, if not the only, means of expressing both the doer of an act and the practicer of an art or craft; for example, *murderer*, *astrologer*. Still a distinction between the two purposes was, in a manner, preserved by confining the suffix for the former purpose generally to a verb, and for the latter to a noun, that is, the name of the art or profession practiced. A more modern development in the same direction has led to the free appropriation of the Greek suffixes of use, *ize*, *ism*, *ist*, to make upon nouns, after the Greek model, verbs of using, abstract nouns of usage, and personal nouns for the user of the thing; for example, *dogmatize*, *dogmatism*, and *dogmatist*, — words an acquaintance with which will not be denied by certain critics to the present writer. A movement towards symmetry and consistency leads us to avoid new coinage in *er* upon substantive roots, such, for instance, as *geologer* and *organer* would be. There is not only a weakness, but a kind of insincerity, in the interchanging and confusing of these transplanted and assimilated suffixes, now well distinguished and valuable, — and valuable, of course, just in the degree in which their exact and distinctive senses are maintained. And I here remark upon an astonishingly neglected difference — neglected by men who should and do know better — between the terminations *ize* and *yse*. Both of these, indeed, are from the Greek; but the latter, although it is frequently confounded with the former, has nothing in common with it, not being a suffix at all, but representing the Greek λύσις, a loosening, as in *paralyse* and *analyse*, which are often absurdly spelled *paralyze* and *analyze*, and which we may perhaps look

to see spelled *paralize* and *analize* in what has been called "the good English of the future."

This consideration of terminations in *ist* leads me to remark upon another word of late introduction, *physicist*. In its sound, *fizzisist*, it is unlovely, and in its formation it is irregular and ambiguous. From our lazy, make-shift, and really unnatural habit of going to Greek and Latin, instead of combining or developing the elements of our own language, when we need a name for a new thought or a new thing, we have two words, of which, although they mean very different things, one is a mere plural form of the other, — *physic*, the art of healing, and any drug or medicinal substance, and *physics*, the science which treats of the properties of matter. Now to express by the use of the suffix *ist* a student or professor of the latter science, we should make the word *physics-ist*. But that being intolerable in sound, we have in its stead *physic-ist*, which really, according to its formation, means a professor or student of the art of physic, — quite a different meaning from that of which we are seeking the expression; and we pronounce it, instead of *fizzikist*, *fizzisist*, thus not really improving much on *fizziksist*, if indeed the latter, by the interruption by a *k* of the continued hissing, is not the pleasanter word, or rather the less offensive. We thus obtain only an incorrect formation, an etymologically ambiguous meaning, and a succession of hisses which our performance well deserves. I am not here pronouncing against the use of *physicist*, although a better word is much to be desired; but merely remarking upon one of the evils that come from our weak way of going to foreign languages to supply us with words for ideas which were already expressed

in English words, or which might have been expressed by English combinations. We did not gain much, to say the least, when we dropped *leech* and *leecheraft* for *physician* and *medicine*. We might learn in this respect much from the Germans, who within the last half century have turned many Latin and Greek words out of their language, even in their scientific vocabulary, to replace them by Teutonic words, simple and compound; the gain whereby to their language in strength, significance, and symmetry has been great, and no less in nationality of character.

The last and altogether the most exquisite example of *ist*-ing that I have met with is in the following paragraph in a tremendous puff of the hennery of a young woman in Pennsylvania: "One young country girl, Miss A. K., of Bethel, Pennsylvania, is entitled to the praise of being the best lady poultryist on record." I have been lifted very high upon winged words before, but "lady poultryist" for henwife is a pitch of elegance to rise to which quite takes one's breath away. It is a very good example of what we may be brought to if every woman must be called a lady, and every occupation must have a fine name. Miss K., if henwife is too homely a word to be applied to her, is a poulterer, or, if her sex must be indicated, a poulteress; for we are told that she not only raises, but buys and sells poultry.

It is remarkable that the people who are so exquisitely elegant and grandiloquent are those who are least able to write a simple English sentence correctly. Thus this same writer, in another part of his article, tells us that "when attacked by the prevailing poultry disease last year, Miss K. freely checked its spread by the free use of lime." Now, it is per-

haps in the order of nature that a poultryist should be attacked by the poultry disease. Indeed, it would seem as if a poultryist must mean a person who has that ailment. But I doubt that the writer did intend to publish to the world that this young woman was thus afflicted, and that she subjected herself and her surroundings to a course of [illegible] therefor. Yet what he says means that, and nothing else. The blunder that he makes is not uncommon with people who cannot see the logical connection of words in sentences. It would be very much better to find out and to master that than to invent such ridiculous phrases as lady poultryist.

"POLITIQUE" AND POLITICAL.

It is appropriate that I should here remark upon the following proposition made by the able Vienna correspondent of the New York "Times:" —

"I must take this occasion to ask some of our linguists, Mr. Richard Grant White, for instance, if we cannot adopt the word *politique*. 'Political reasons' is not the equivalent of the concise and comprehensive French term; and especially in America, where the word 'politics' has been degraded until it conveys something of a reproach, 'a political reason' is not *une raison politique*. There is a certain amount of opprobrium conveyed when we speak of a man as a 'politician.' We have adopted a few very expressive French words, — 'solidarity,' to give an example, — and I do not see why we should not appropriate such large and useful words as *politique*, *sagesse*, *esprit*, *morale*, and about a half dozen more of the sort."

It is first to be said that the writer to whom this question is referred makes no pretension to being a linguist; and at the very outset informed his readers

that he undertook upon this subject only what he could do "without venturing beyond the limits of his own yet imperfect knowledge of his mother tongue." [1] Nor does he presume to "adopt" a word, except for his own use, or to express more than an individual opinion as to the propriety of its adoption by others. As to the word proposed, however, there does indeed seem to him no necessity for transplanting it from the French language into the English. Such transfers are sometimes necessary, although much more rarely than is supposed; but they are always to be avoided, unless they enable us to express a thought which is not within the compass of our own vocabulary. It is difficult to discover what the French *politique* expresses which is not better expressed by our own *politic*, *politics*, *political*, and *politician*. Indeed, here we have much the advantage; for *politique* is already overloaded in French, in which it means politic, political, a politic person, a politician, politics, and state policy. Only a somewhat whimsical fancy, it seems to me, can find in *une raison politique* any meaning other or better than in a political reason, a politic reason, or a reason of state policy. And as to the degradation of politics by politicians with us, it would hardly be wise to confess that it had become so thorough and absolute that we must "putrify" it in our language. The Crédit Mobilier has brought disgrace, not honor, upon those who were engaged in it; and William Tweed was sent to the penitentiary on Blackwell's Island. As to the other words brought forward as examples of happy transplantation, it is not so certain that some of them might not well be spared. Without being too narrowly proud to learn or to

[1] Preface to *Words and their Uses*.

borrow from others, may we not say with George Herbert, —

> "Let foreign nations of their language boast,
> What fine variety each tongue affords;
> I like our language, as our men and coast.
> Who cannot dresse it well want not, not words."
>
> (The Church, page 138.)

SPECIALTY AND SPECIALITY.

NEW YORK, *December* 17, 1874.

SIR, — In your next criticism on words used in improper forms will you not take into consideration *specialty*, now so general in use for *speciality*? Our language has need of both forms to express different ideas, as it has for realty, reality, personality, personality. So, referring to a peculiar character of obligation known in law, we call it a "specialty," as Shakespeare and the law writers did; but in speaking of a special pursuit or a merchandising in one article, we should say "speciality." Before the publication of the 1859 quarto edition of Webster's Dictionary "speciality" was the only form in use to express the idea of an occupation limited to one object. I have met with it thus in books published by all the leading publishers, some as far back as 1828, and in no single instance, till after 1859, was it written "specialty" in this sense. I have also been familiar with it in speech since 1845, and the change in pronunciation was not until after 1859. That it was an error or oversight of the editor of the dictionary in confounding the two forms, and giving only one, is evident from the introduction into the recent quarto edition of that work of the other form, "speciality," with numerous extracts from the best writers showing its prevalent use. Still, in the face of this, the newspapers continue the corrupt form, and in conversation it is fast supplanting the four-syllabled word. One does not like to be peculiar in the use of a word that intelligent people speak differently, and there is something pedantic in frequently explaining why we pronounce a word

differently from the general use. As "speciality," the word conforms to the rule of our language in the formation of nouns from adjectives ending in *al*, as *partial-ity*, *venal-ity*, *temporal-ity*, and a hundred others. There are only three or four exceptions. I can give you many proofs of the correctness of the foregoing views if desired.

Admiring the good fight you are making for our noble language,

I am truly yours, S. H. T.

Without venturing to give a decided opinion against this correspondent, I am inclined to doubt the validity of the distinction which he has drawn. Usage may, if it will, draw that distinction, and thus gain a word for the expression of a modification of an idea. But as a matter of fact I doubt whether an attempt to do so has ever been made. *Specialty* and *speciality* seem rather to be two forms of the same word, in the latter of which the *i* is merely a connecting vowel. Classical Latin has no corresponding noun; but in mediæval Latin we have *specialitas*, and the French word, formed upon the accusative *specialitatem*, is *spécialité*. This would seem to show that *speciality* is etymologically the proper form. But there is no question, I believe, that *specialty* is much the older English form, — older by two or three centuries than *speciality;* and when the latter appeared it does not seem to have carried with it any discriminating power.

A specialty in law is merely a contract for a particular, specified, or special purpose, in contradistinction from a simple contract; and the same or a similar idea seems to be conveyed when the word, used in either form, is applied to something to which a person has given, or professes to give, special atten-

former representing the concrete thing, the latter the abstract quality. The suggestion that *specialty* and *speciality* should be used discriminatively is worthy of consideration; but the question which it raises is one which might better be submitted to Professor Haldeman, who has given so much attention to the affixes of our language.

GOOD USAGE VERSUS BAD SENSE.

There is a very common use of what the grammarians call the perfect infinitive (for example, to have loved) which is so incongruous as to be nonsensical. Examples are found in the following passages from Black's charming "Princess of Thule:"—

"He [Mosenberg] would have liked to have shown off Sheilah to some of his friends." (Page 272, Harper's edition.)

"One friend she had who would have rejoiced to have been of the least assistance to her." (Page 282.)

Now, it is very plain that what Mosenberg would have liked, at a certain time, was *to show* off at that time the charming Sheilah to his friends who were present at that time. He could not have liked at that time to *have shown* her off. It might be properly said of him at an after-time that to have shown her off at the former time would have given him pleasure in the recollection. So, Sheilah's friend would have been glad *to be* of assistance to her. The first part of the assertion in such sentences is ogically incongruous with the second.

The error in question is very common, even among good writers, and is not at all new. The absurdity of the construction is made yet more apparent than

it is in the examples from "The Princess of Thule" by the following from Mr. Mallock's "New Republic:" —

"Leslie was *going to have spoken*." (Book I., chap. iv.)
"Mr. Luke was *going to have answered*." (Book III., chap. iii.)

Leslie could not be going to *have* spoken; he was going *to speak*; Mr. Luke was going *to answer*. The misconstruction here becomes ridiculous by the immediate juxtaposition of a present, or indefinite, participle (*going*), asserting immediate future action, with a verbal phrase implying completed action (*to have spoken*). The logical construction, however, is exactly the same as if (in Mr. Black's phrase) Mr. Mallock had written, "Leslie would have begun to have spoken;" "Mr. Luke would have begun to have answered."

As to the length of time that this misconstruction has obtained, even among writers of high repute, it is three hundred years and more; during which time, indeed, it has been the usage of the best writers in England. I remember it in Latimer's sermons (A. D. 1562), but cannot now put my finger upon the passages. Here are, however, a few examples ready at hand, which, with those given above, will show its prevalence among good and highly educated writers for three centuries:—

"*Hadst* thou been here *to have heard* how I spurred the wench with incantations." (Heywood, Fair Maid of the Exchange, Act I., Scene 2.)

". . . . it *would have made* your ladyship *have sung* nothing but merry jigs." (Middleton, Father Hubburd's Tales, Works, v. 569.)

". . . . and you *would have broke* into infinite laughter

. . . *to have seen* how quickly the muff swallowed her hand again." (The same, page 593.)

"I *could have been* content *to have honoured* him." (Shirley, The Young Admiral, Act I., Scene 1.)

"This might very well *have disposed* his Majesty *to have hastened* his march to Oxford." (Clarendon, History of the Rebellion, Book VIII., page 542, ed. 1839.)

"Wee *were* both very unwilling *to have gon* in regard of that concours of people at Westminster." (Sir W. Waller's Vindication, page 105.)

"Under these circumstances it *would have been* idle for the crown *to have expected* aid," etc. (Buckle, History of Civilization, vol. iii., chap. i.)

In all these passages, and in all cases of the misuse of which they are examples, the error is in the use of *have* and a definite participle instead of the infinitive, when the thought which is to be expressed is indefinite and contingent. Logical congruity requires: "It would have been idle for the crown *to expect* aid;" "Hadst thou been here *to hear* how I spurred the wench," etc.

The fact that the misconstruction here pointed out, and which I am sure that no one will now defend, has the support of the usage of the best English writers from the earliest years of modern English to the present day is a striking illustration of the truth that even the best and longest continued usage is not and should not be an absolute law in language. The best usage may have been wrong.

This muddle of thought and consequent misconstruction must not be confounded with a use of the same form in a present reference to a past time. Thus, in "The Princess of Thule," we have this sentence: —

"I should like to have seen the old woman before she died." (Page 418.)

Here the speaker expresses a present wish, indeed; but that wish may reasonably be either for something to come or for something unattained in the past; and it is the latter. There is no logical inconsistency between the two parts of this assertion. If the assertion had been with reference to time past, the sentence should properly have been, "I *should have liked to* see the old woman before she died." But there is no time of which the assertion, "I *should have liked* to have seen the old woman," etc., is consistent with reason.

This is one illustration of the *rationale* of the construction of the English sentence. Some people may call it grammar; and so they might call it Freemasonry, and with as much reason. It has nothing to do with the forms of words, or with their dependent relations.

"FEELING BAD" AND "FEELING BADLY."

Upon hardly any other point have I received so many letters of inquiry as upon the very trivial one whether it is proper to say, "I feel bad" or "I feel badly." I thought that I had said all that I could be expected to say about it, and that it was dismissed forever. But the inquiries continue at brief intervals, and seem to be made by persons — ladies invariably — who are quite ignorant that I have said my little say about the little matter. And now two come together, one of which is made in such a tone of pitiful perplexity that I have not the heart to pass it by unnoticed.

Briefly, then, it is right to use *bad* in regard to feel

ing or being, and *badly* in regard to doing. For example, "That was done very badly, and I feel very bad about it," or, "I have behaved badly, and I feel bad about it," — not, "I feel badly."

As regards physical ills, we say, for example, "My head aches badly this morning," but, "My head is very bad this morning;" or, "My head feels very bad," etc.; not, "My head is badly," or "feels badly." Speaking generally of health or physical condition, we say, "I feel ill," or, "I feel sick;" not, "I feel bad." That, although permissible and quite right as to mere form, can hardly be regarded as in the best style of English. When we are in low spirits we say that we feel blue, not that we feel bluely. And we say that the grass looks green and that the day looks bright, not that the one looks greenly and the other brightly. The verbs in these cases express seeming or being or feeling. When we speak of doing we use an adverb, thus: "That woman dresses badly;" but speaking of the result we say, that is, we may say, "Her dress always looks bad."

When we say that "the grass looks green," "I feel blue," we merely express a fact of perception; we say that something *seems* thus or so, — that the grass seems green to us, that we seem blue to ourselves; that is, have a consciousness of depression which in whimsical metaphor we call feeling blue. On the other hand, when we say that a woman dresses badly, or that the air bites keenly, we say that something is *done*.

Now as to the use of *feel* with a word expressing condition or appearance, the whole analogy of the language shows that the latter word should be an adjective, and not an adverb. For example: "I feel sad,"

[illegible] "I feel glad," not, "I feel [illegible]," not, "I feel sickly;" "I feel [illegible]," "I feel wretched," not, [illegible] "I feel happy," not, "I feel [illegible]," not, "I feel sinfully," and [illegible] vocabulary of seeming and [illegible] why the adjective *bad* [illegible] to this universal rule.

[illegible] reflection, and, above [illegible] in the use of "I feel bad," [illegible] the question in its favor with [illegible] side, take a [illegible] language, or, on the [illegible] prim feminine prej- [illegible] dames who [illegible] and confirm them in [illegible] the real cause [illegible] The word *bad* conveys [illegible] goodness and of soundness, [illegible] as the case may be. We say [illegible] and usage has transferred, [illegible] physical unsavoriness (the [illegible] in the egg to moral qualities [illegible] we mean a man who is [illegible] that is physically [illegible] have no real con- [illegible] a figurative like- [illegible] man may feel bad physically. [illegible] may be really more or less [illegible] — and of this he may [illegible] he feels bad. [illegible] what he should not have done, [illegible] he has done badly what he should have done,

he is, in like manner, conscious of defect, of deterioration, and he feels bad, there being again a metaphorical change in the use of the word. For, in the phrase "I feel bad," *bad* has not the sense which it has in the phrase "a bad man," nor does its meaning come from the sense of the word in that phrase. The man feels bad just as he feels glad, or feels sad, or feels sorry, or feels happy. He does not feel that he is a bad man, any more than a boy, when he says that, for any reason, "he feels good," means that he feels that he is a good boy. For in the phrases a good man, a good boy, a good woman, the meaning has by long usage been confined to an expression of the moral nature of the persons to whom they are respectively applied. And — to take a necessary step yet further in this direction — by a conventional and altogether unwarranted usage among women (who, like most sects, have a tendency to a cant phraseology of their own), *bad*, as applied by women to a woman, refers altogether to her sexual conduct. Among women, "a bad woman" means an unchaste woman. Hence the feminine doubt as to the use of the phrase "I feel bad;" and hence the fact that all the letters of inquiry that I have received upon the subject have been from female writers. But there is in this esoteric feminine use of the word no reason why *bad* should be an exception to the rule that governs *glad* and *sad* and *sorry*, and all other like adjectives in the language.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CANT, TRADING AND OTHER.

CANT and slang are often spoken of as if they were the same thing, or varieties of the same thing; but they are not so. They have, indeed, this in common, that they are both deviations from the correct, normal use of language. In both, words are used in a sense which does not rightly belong to them, either etymologically or according to good usage. But between them there is this great difference, that cant is of limited and slang of general use; cant words and phrases are contrived by special classes for their own special purposes; slang originates, we hardly know how or why, and attains more or less vogue, according to circumstances which have general application. In slang, humor or satire is more or less an element. For example, when a gentleman who is inclined to talk somewhat tediously upon a subject which he has at heart, but about which his hearers are not much inclined to hear, is told to "hire a hall," he is generally able to see some satire and the others some humor in the recommendation. Slang has, in many cases, a pith and pungency which make it not only pardonable, but tolerable. It often expresses a feeling, if not a thought, of the passing day, which could not be so forcibly expressed — for the day — in any other phraseology. It is generally evanescent; but sometimes it endures and becomes a part of the recognized vocabulary of a language. For example, the word *mob* was

originally slang. It is supposed to be a contraction, — the first syllable of *mobile vulgus ;* a scornful phrase for the lowest order of common people. *Tandem*, also, was originally a slang word. It is Latin for "at length;" but as applied to driving two horses at length instead of abreast, it is just such Latin as *nunquam animus* for "never mind." Another slang word, *swell*, meaning grand, fine, pretentious, is now perceptibly passing into the recognized vocabulary of good usage. It is a very convenient and expressive word, and is used now by the best speakers of English without hesitation. It can hardly fail to appear in "the dictionary" of the next generation.

Cant is not so respectable; and yet it is, on the whole, more enduring. It appertains, as I have said, to special classes, and is generally offensive to those who do not belong to those classes. It very rarely passes into general usage. There is religious cant and trading cant, artists' cant and thieves' cant, and there is the cant of literature and even of science. Almost every occupation has its cant, which is not very well understood by the outside world. Women have their cant: cant of the household, cant of society, cant of dress, and, finally and absolutely, pure feminine cant. Far be it from me to venture comment upon the last, or even to give illustrations of it. Religious cant has much to do with the distaste which many sensible, right feeling, and not irreligious people have for religious affairs. An example of a religious cant phrase in very common use is "walk and conversation." Not one in a thousand of those who use it knows what it really means. They use it thinking that in it "conversation" means speech, daily talk. But it really means association,

[illegible] before, the use of "conversation" is [illegible] being of very modern date, — [illegible] the origin of the phrase "walk and [illegible]

[illegible] communities like ours, in which trade [illegible] large a proportion of the people [illegible] engage more general than any other, [illegible] works its way into a somewhat general [illegible] The use of *ballance* for rest, remainder, [illegible] what is left, may perhaps be regarded as [illegible] adoption of trading cant. I shall remark briefly upon some other cant phrases, which [illegible] commerce, or finance, has introduced to our [illegible]

[illegible] strangest, and, to me, most [illegible] of these is the phrase *covered into*, as [illegible] "covered into the Treasury." A few years ago this phrase made its appearance in the [illegible] and was instantly caught up by those who did not know what it meant, but supposed it was [illegible] time, and they, after the fashion of such people, used it with very imposing effect. We heard, and still hear, of the vast sums being "covered into the Treasury." Learned Washington correspondents write it, and still more learned legislators speak it; but what it means they, like the old book-collector in regard to his treasure, do not care to know. I have often been asked what it meant; I have often asked others, men familiar all their lives with financial affairs on a large scale, but in vain. No one could tell. It seems to me about as foolish and unmeaning an assemblage of words as I ever saw or heard. It is, I believe, already beginning to pass out of use. It may well be cast into the waste-basket

of oblivion, to torment some unhappy verbal critic who, in time to come, shall be called upon to explain the "American" (for it is not English) phraseology of to-day.[1]

Another phrase of, I believe, quite as recent origin, and which has come into more general use, is *rules high*, or low, as the case may be. Thus in the London "Truth:" "The price of what are termed first-class investment securities rules too high." This use of *rules* seems to me sheer cant, and cant which those who use it would be puzzled reasonably to interpret. I have heard an attempt to explain it as meaning that the price of bonds, land, or what not, is high or low, as a rule. But a little observation and thought will discover that this is not the meaning of the phrase as it is used. For it is applied to a single article and as to the future. I have again and again heard, "That article will rule higher next spring," and, "Real estate will rule higher after the election." The phrase is a mere piece of affectation, the result, possibly, of a blunder at first on the part of some man rich enough to buy the flattery of imitation, and then of a desire to seem to have at command the phraseology of the finest financial circles. Such phrases as this are

[1] A correspondent who read the remarks above on their first publication kindly furnished me with the following explanation of the phrase in question: "'Covered into the Treasury' is a phrase expressive of the transfer of an unexpended balance of an appropriation back into the Treasury, and the final balancing and canceling of the account. The phrase was originally 'Covering [the item, in a balance sheet] by a transfer of the amount into the Treasury.' The 'covering' being a legitimate use of the word, as 'the appropriation covers the cost,' that is, balances and cancels each the other, or, the profits of the business cover the expenses. The intermediate words of the phrase, 'by a transfer of the amount,' being eliminated as redundant, the word *cover* in this use really includes the idea of transfer." This is manifestly satisfactory to my correspondent and may be so to others; but it only makes it more clear to me that the phrase is cant, pure and simple.

of a very different sort from the broker's "call" and "long" and "short" and "put" and "spread," and so forth. These are honest, unpretending cant, — as honest and unpretending as the cant of thieves; they are used for convenience, and make no pretension to be anything else than a trouble-saving contrivance, intended only for those who have invented them.

Line is used in a canting way, chiefly by jobbers and retailers. These will not only say, but write and print, that they have "the finest line of spring goods" ever seen in this city. I have in vain endeavored to surmise the meaning of *line* thus used, and have asked an explanation of it from those who thus use it, — equally in vain. It will be seen at once that it is not used with the meaning that it has in the question, "Any other article in our line?" where *line* means line of business. But a line of goods, — what is it? Not goods in cases arranged in a line, for it is applied to a trader's whole stock, as "A, B & Co. have a fine line of goods;" to a part of it, as "D, C & Co. have a fine line of woolens;" and to a part of a part, for you will see placards on short rows or little heaps of goods, "All goods on this line $5." And yet in a newspaper before me I see a flaming advertisement announcing that Messrs —— & Co. "have just received a full line of kid gloves." It is very meaningless cant.

So is another phrase, of very recent origin, *closed out*, which is, I believe, a pure Americanism. I do not know, at least, of its use elsewhere than in New York and the little New Yorks. I have in vain asked for a reasonable explanation of this phrase. A door may be closed, and, metaphorically, an account or a sale may be closed. Goods may be turned

out-of-doors. But how anything can, in the proper meaning of the words, be "closed out," I have found no one able to explain. Nor have I even been able to get any one to tell me what he thought he meant by closing out goods other than selling all of them. And yet it has, I suppose, to certain people a certain meaning, which they might much better express rightly. In other words it is cant. The adolescent vendor who stands on the street corner and cries, as I have heard him cry scores of times, "Heah you ah! cul-losin 'em out; two dollah scahfs faw foh shill'n," uses the phrase in just the same sense in which it was used by the very jobber who "closed out the lot" to him.

Collect has in trade come to be mere cant. A young man will enter an office and ask, "Can I collect X, Y & Co.'s bill?" or he will be told by his employers to go out and "collect that bill." Now, you cannot collect one bill any more than you can assemble one man. To collect is to gather together. The idea of numbers is essential to that of collection. You may collect the money for a number of bills (if you can); but it may be said without hypercriticism that to speak of collecting one bill is to use language with ridiculous absurdity. This, too, is a novelty, and, I believe, an Americanism. I doubt that it is a generation old, and I have never heard it, or met with evidence of its use, in England. Connected with it is a dreadful canting formula, "C. O. D." (meaning either collect on delivery or cash on delivery), which has come to be regarded, not as an abbreviation, but as a phrase, and is pronounced "*see, oh, dee;*" and Messrs. Shoddy & Co. will call attention to their "elegant stock of C. O. D fall

and winter clothing." Entirely apart from the terror which the idea of payment on delivery carries to the general mind, this canting cipher has become one of the nuisances of modern trading language.

Invest used without an object, as, "I think I shall invest," "He invested in governments," is, if not traders' cant, a gross misuse, brought into vogue by the traders in money. A man may invest money or other interests in this or that enterprise, security, or business; but he cannot simply invest, the verb being one that requires an object. Some people seem to think that it is either fine or funny to use the word in this objectless way. Thus, I find in the London "Truth," "A few days ago I invested in 'Helen's Babies.'" Why not, I bought the book? What is gained by the misuse of the other word?

I cannot but regard a certain use of the plural, as "ales, wines, teas," "woolens, silks, cottons," as a sort of traders' cant, and to many persons it is very offensive. What reason is there for a man who deals in malt liquor announcing that he has a fine stock of *ales* on hand, when what he has is a stock of ale of various kinds? What he means is that he has Bass's ale, and Burton ale, and Albany ale, and others; but these are only different kinds of one thing. One might as well talk of waters, meaning Croton water and spring water. True, we have in the Bible (Kings or Chronicles, I don't remember which; and, O criticaster, I don't think it worth my while to look), "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" But this does not speak of the water of Abana and that of Pharpar, or that of the several rivers of Judea, as various "waters." The plural is used as it is in

"the waters of the great deep," and in a hundred other like instances. I cannot but think that this use of the plural, although it is no novelty and has some analogical support, comes originally of pretension. It was thought to be finer, a more swell thing, to have "ales and wines" to sell than merely ale and wine. We never hear of a grocer's having "salts," "molasseses," "wheats," "flours," or "breads," but properly of various brands or kinds of those things. And so we should hear only of various kinds of ale, wine, woolen, silk, cotton, and so forth.

Apropos of this point, I observed, the other day, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues up town, a large and flagrantly elegant sign, on which it was announced, first, that families would be supplied with rockaways; but I saw no sign of any family carriage of that kind. Next, saddle-rocks were promised, and blue points, and finally east rivers, and all "from our own beds." It was not until I turned the corner wondering how rockaways and points and rocks and rivers came into "our own beds," and what families could do with them, that I saw any intimation what these extraordinary articles of family supply really were; and then it came to me in the imperative mood, in many colors, "Try our Fries." I did not do so, but the entreaty — or was it command? — led me to suspect that the word "oyster" was lying somewhere near by, hidden, it might be, under a shell or in a bed; and that the solitary *s* that rightfully belonged to that word had been made to do quadruple duty by being appended to the four words which merely described what kinds of oysters could be had. Seriously, how much easier and better it would be to use both noun and adjective, — Rockaway, Saddle-Rock, Blue Point, and

East River Oysters, — O man of Wall Street! for it is you that I am addressing. For when you talk of buying and selling "governments" — meaning not the ruling powers of various countries, but the bonds or securities of the government of this country or of some other — you put yourself, in the use of language, exactly on a level with the oysterman who sets up in his window, "Try our Fries."

Another form of trading cant appears constantly in business correspondence: "Your favor of the 1st inst. is received, and *contents noted*." The affectation and awkwardness of the phrase are plain enough without a word of comment; and at any rate of what use is it? What meaning has it, to satisfy any reasonable creature? Why should one reasonable creature address it to another? Of course the contents of a business letter addressed to a business man are noted by him. He might just as well inform his correspondent that his letter had been opened, for it is opened only that its contents may be noted.

Of a like sort is the phrase commonly used in mercantile correspondence when a check is sent, or, to use the elegant phrase, "a remittance is made." This is, "*Please find inclosed* our check," etc. A more ridiculous use of words, it seems to me, there could not be. I heard its absurdity remarked upon long ago by thorough-bred merchants and Wall Street men. How much more natural, simpler, better in every way, is the phrase in the opening of a letter which I received only yesterday from a publishing house of the highest standing: "We inclose herewith our check," etc. I thought it admirable.

One of the merchants who laughed at "Please find," etc., scoffed at another bit of mercantile cant

Our Mr. So and So. It seems to me that his ridicule was well bestowed. If a house is composed of Mr. John A and Mr. James B, with Mr. Charles C as an associate, and is known as A, B & Co., it is surely quite sufficiently explicit if in their correspondence they call the principals or the "Co." by their simple names, without dubbing them "Our Mr. John A," or "Our Mr. Charles C." Affectation again, ending in cant.

I intended to remark upon some other forms of cant, among them the cant of journalism, in which, for example, *our special* has become a mystery to the outside world, meaning sometimes a man, a correspondent, sometimes a telegram; in which *interpreted* and *rendered* take the place of *acted*, *played*, or *sung;* in which a piece of music is called *a number*, and skill in art is called *technique*. The last has become a part of the stock cant of "fashionable" art gabble. Every "lady pianiste" is ready to go into raptures over her favorite performer's "splendid *teckneek*." I forbear, however, going further into this subject, and leave it with merely a caution against the use of stereotyped conventional phrases, which are sure to become cant.

CHAPTER XXX.

ELEGANT ENGLISH.

SOME of my readers I know, and many more I suspect, have the notion that the main purpose of what I have written upon language is to teach people to speak elegant English; or I should rather say to help or to lead, or, more elegantly, to induce people so to speak. For to presume to *teach* any one English, or to impart to him any knowledge in regard to it, no matter how much more ignorant he may be than you are, is, I have some reason to suspect, an offense to be resented even with rudeness. But there could not be a greater mistake than that which I have mentioned. Among my prayers as to deliverance from the little miseries of life is that I may be defended from elegant speaking. Indeed, elegance of any kind has become rather oppressive. One of the curses of the day is that everybody wishes to be elegant, — elegant meaning fine, showy, and expensive: the exceptions being a few people who are content to live their lives according to their own standards of comfort, of happiness, and of beauty, quite indifferent to the admiration, the envy, or even the criticism of others.

Elegance in language, however, although it is almost a modern affectation, is not so much sought after now as it was in the days of our fathers and grandfathers. Language seems to have been then regarded as something to be thought of and valued for itself, apart from the thoughts that it conveyed

The "language" of a book, or a play, or a sermon was spoken of with praise or dispraise: and what was meant was not the use of words, or the construction of the sentences as to sense and rhythm, but the words themselves. I remember meeting in my early youth, in the lobby of a theatre where a new comedy had just been produced, an aged actor of the old school, very polished in manner and somewhat demonstrative in his courtesy. He asked me what I thought of the new play. I replied that I thought it very dull; that the situations were forced and the characters of the personages unnatural. "Well, yes," he replied, "I 'm inclined to think you 're right; but the language is very elegant; that ought to save it." I remember being puzzled as to what he could mean by the language being elegant, and to divine why elegant language should save a dull, unnatural play from being damned. I found out that he meant that it was full of fine words, put together in such a way that they had an effect on the ear, and perhaps on the mind, analogous to that produced on the eye by fine clothes and fine furniture. I afterwards remarked this same admiration of words by themselves in other persons of his period, and found traces of it in books.

In this respect there has been a reaction, which during the past generation was healthy and tended to simplicity of speech, and to a disregard, even in poetry, of any other consideration than the clear and strong utterance of thought. Of late, however, it has gone too far, and has brought slang into use, even in good society, and has led also to an abbreviated style of speech and of writing, which is almost as bad as slang, and in some cases much worse.

Deliberate elegance in language is now the sign either of an extreme of pedantry and affectation, or, more generally, of inferior social and intellectual culture. I heard of a woman, who was engaged to render some chance assistance in a household, who informed her employer that "she and her chil'n hed ben awful sick; but they went into the country, and they resuscitated dreadful." The good woman meant that they soon got well; but not content with simple language that would have satisfied Sir Philip Sidney, or Shakespeare, or Lord Bacon, or Goldsmith, or Thackeray, she strove after elegance in speech, with the disastrous result above recorded. And having been rusticated in my Freshman year for some offense against college discipline, I fell among some people in the rural part of Eastern Pennsylvania who were so very elegant in their language that they never spoke of helping you to anything at table, but of assisting you to it; and one day, my hostess asking me if she should "assist me to some sass," I, taken rather suddenly by this dispensation of elegance, fell into such a fit of unseemly laughter that all the excuses and explanations that I could contrive did not quite atone for my involuntary lapse from good manners, and there was a constraint at that table until I was recalled within the wholesome influence of mingled classics and college slang.

It is to be observed that those who are at pains to speak elegantly always choose a longer in place of a shorter word, — one of Latin or Greek, instead of one of purely English, origin. They also avoid idioms, those family traits of language, and — when they are sufficiently instructed — they are solicitous as to their grammar, and talk in sentences that have

an air of being uttered to be parsed. Prigs and pedants generally speak in elegant language. For this they are not altogether in fault. The habit is a "survival" of the school-teaching of the last generation and of the generation before the last. Indeed, elegant English may be said to have come into vogue in the latter part of the last century. It was one of the results of the refining influence (much needed) of the Queen Anne school of essayists, supplemented by the tendency to inflation ("making little fishes talk like whales") imparted to the English language by Dr. Johnson. True, there were the Euphuists of the Elizabethan era and other affecters of elegant speech, some of whom Shakespeare has satirized; but these were very few in number, and formed a small class apart by themselves. The Euphuists were almost a sect or a school, and it was not until about a hundred years ago that elegance of language became a common affectation.

In illustration of this part of my subject, I cite some counsels and cautions from a very good book of its kind, published about fifty years ago in Boston, "The English Teacher, or Private Learner's Guide," which is by Isaac Alger, Jr., A. M., who designates himself, further, as "Teacher of Youth." He has a chapter on purity of style, which he well defines as consisting in the use of such words and such constructions as belong to the idiom of the language which we speak. But when he comes to particulars, we, or I at least, cannot so readily agree with him; for he says that all such words and phrases as the following should be avoided: "quoth he," "erewhile," "I wist not," "behest," and "self-same." Now, the first three of these would sound affected in common

[illegible] a magazine article, for [illegible] English. But [illegible] than they are, and in [illegible] they [illegible] by the rest [illegible] and expresses in [illegible] we have no [illegible] best [illegible] elegant. [illegible] also, that [illegible] English [illegible] is no [illegible] me- [illegible] speak- [illegible] even of [illegible]

[illegible] with [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

expresses what no other English word or even phrase will quite express, and is in place even in the gravest historical composition. Macaulay would not have hesitated a moment about using it, nor, I believe, would Ruskin now hesitate, nor even those more fastidious but less forcible and picturesque writers, Sir Arthur Helps and Matthew Arnold.

I cannot do better than to contrast some other phrases which offended Mr. Alger with the more elegant ones he would have substituted for them.

I *had as lief* do it myself as persuade another to do it.	I *would as readily* do it myself as persuade another to do it.
He is not *a whit* better than those whom he so liberally condemns.	He is not *in any degree* better than those whom he so liberally condemns
He *stands* upon security, and will not liberate him until it be obtained.	He *insists* upon security, and will not liberate him, etc
The meaning of the phrase, as I *take* it, is very different from the common acceptation.	The meaning of the phrase, as I *understand* it, is very different, etc.
He might have perceived *with half an eye* the difficulties to which his conduct exposed him.	He might have perceived *by a transient view* the difficulties, etc.
This performance is *much at one with the other*	This performance is *of the same value as the other.*

Now, in every one of these examples, the amendment for elegance' sake enfeebles the sentence. There is no better English than "as lief" or "a whit," and as to "stands upon security," it means exactly what is meant by "insists upon security," and expresses it more tersely and graphically. Falstaff's tailor was to have sent him two and twenty yards of satin, but the fat knight says that he and the rest of his craft "stand upon security." In the change of "I take it" to "I understand it," there is not, as to the mere words, any enfeebling of this phrase; but "I take it" corresponds to "acceptation" much better than

"understand" does. It is amusing to see the elegant critic shrink from the simple English "I take," and submit without a murmur to the Romance "accept." To those who misapprehend it, the phrase "half an eye" may carry an unpleasant or, at least, a grotesque suggestion; but at the worst how much better it is than such weak elegance as a "transient view"! "Half an eye," however, does not suppose that a person's eye is to be cut in two, and that he is to see as well with one half as with the whole. An eye is a glance, a look; and half an eye is merely the slightest possible glance. "Much at one" is not only a good bit of idiomatic English, but it means what "of the same value as" does not mean. It expresses sameness or close correspondence much more tersely than the substituted phrase does, — which, indeed, does not express that thought at all; for two performances might be of the same value, and yet be quite unlike.

I cite these few instances of the taste of half a century ago as examples of the sort of elegance which it is always well to avoid. In general, eschew elegance; and if you are not a practiced writer and familiar with the best literature of the language, whenever you have writen anything that seems to you particularly elegant, for that very reason, if you cannot omit the substance of it, rewrite it in the simplest and homeliest language that will express your thought. Even men of sense and culture are apt to be misled into absurdity by a sounding phrase. Here I find a distinguished clergyman saying of another distinguished clergyman, deceased, "His habits were rather retired, and the periphery of his life was the

circumference of his affections." I cannot but think this a very weak and inflated way of saying, or trying to say, that the end of the man's life was love. True, the phrase is an imitation of one used by Sir Thomas Browne; but Sir Thomas Browne is, like Carlyle, a writer to be enjoyed, but not to be imitated. Horace Greeley, in the earlier part of his career, wrote direct, vigorous English; but toward the end of his life he was beguiled by vanity, born of fame, into pretentiousness and elegance, so that once he even wrote, "whoever chooses to impel animals along a road." Think of a pig-driver impelling the squealing pork!

A few years ago there was a great outbreak of elegance in the use of *mal*. Bad conduct was called mal conduct, and we read in the newspapers, and in the resolutions passed at public meetings, of officers being "found guilty of corrupt, arbitrary, and mal conduct in office." It was used with an air, as if it meant something very terrible indeed, and as if the person using it was extinguishing the offender by a phrase of elegant form and dreadful import. But it was merely a half-ignorant, half-affected imitation of the old phrase, "malversation in office," which is almost technical. Those who used it only made themselves ridiculous. Luckily they suspected this after a while, and the phrase soon dropped into oblivion.

The very last instance of elegance in language that I have heard of is "saloon-parlor." I first heard it — not used, but spoken of — only a short time ago, and I did not suppose that any other person had ever used it but a pretentious woman, who had passed rapidly not only from poverty, but from the coarsest life, to the enjoyment of wealth and such elegance as mere wealth can bring, and who, throwing open the

ever of a great gilded, painted, over-furnished room in a new house that he was showing off to a visitor, said, with a flourish, "And this is the saloon parlor." Even within a few days I received a house-furnisher's advertisement, in which the necessary articles for a "saloon-parlor" are enumerated. I suppose that what is meant is what in the best English of the day is called a drawing-room. This new name is worth a passing notice because of its illustration of the pretentious vulgarity into which the aspiration for elegance is apt to lead the many aspirants. "Parlor," meaning a room for conversation, is a good word; "drawing-room," a room into which people withdraw the women from dinner, is not quite so good, but still is good enough; but "saloon" is a pretentious word, which, although it was in common use in England not long ago, has not much English flavor, and the combination of it with "parlor" makes as bad and offensive a name as could well be concocted.[1]

What I have said on this subject merely gives warning, by illustration, against a tendency which is likely to manifest itself in those who deliberately undertake to make their English elegant, an effort almost sure to end in disaster. Better make slips in grammar or in spelling now and then than affect elegance of language, — far better than misuse it in the way in which, for example, "predicate" and "transpire" are misused so often. As I have before said, they who speak the best English are they who take no thought as to their speech, either as to the words

[1] Since writing this passage I have learned that the phrase "saloon-parlor" had its origin in the boarding trade, and that they who use it apply it to a drawing-room that is made by throwing what used to be front and back parlor, or drawing-room and dining-room, into one large saloon-like apartment.

they use, or as to their way of using them. The mastery of their mother tongue has come to them from association, from social and intellectual training, and from an acquaintance with the writings of the best authors. For this way of learning to speak and write English well there is no substitute; although intelligent endeavor may do somewhat in later years to supply the lack of these advantages in early life. Even then, however, the same end must be obtained by substantially the same means. You may learn a science by dint of persevering application; you cannot so learn to speak and write your mother tongue. If you hear poor English and read poor English, you will pretty surely speak poor English and write poor English.

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